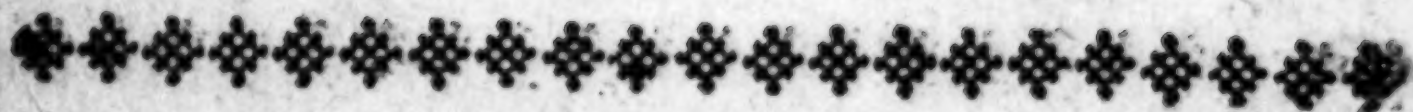


Maple



THE
HISTORY
OF
TOM RIGBY.

VOL. II.



1607/4338 -

NOTES

TOM RIGBY

FOR

RECORDS

Kath. St. Mary

THE

HISTORY

OF

TOM RIGBY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



DUBLIN:

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THE
FIFTH
VOLUME

OF THE
HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF DUBLIN

FROM THE
FIFTH TO THE
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

BY
JAMES H. MURPHY

DUBLIN:
THOMAS A. MITCHELL, PRINTER,
1853.





T H E
H I S T O R Y
O F
T O M R I G B Y.



B O O K VIII.

R I G B Y, soon after his return to Cambridge, went over to Mrs. Hillaston's to pay his compliments, and her son accompanied him. It was with infinite pleasure the good lady saw him so much altered for the better. His reason and sense seem'd to have revisited him again ; that obstinate melancholy had left him, and all the family rejoiced at this happy alteration. Rigby was most particularly endeared to them, as it was imagined this was effected by his company and conversation ; the two ladies therefore welcom'd him with great cordiality : and in the course of the day, Miss Hillaston informed him she expected her young friend about the latter end of the next week. Mrs. Hillaston press'd him to come and spend a month with
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them, for they had settled a pleasing party for that time, as Miss Leeson had engaged to stay a couple of months with them when she visited them next. They promised themselves much happiness, and every thing wore the most agreeable face. The lovesick Rigby long'd for the day that would bring Maria to his eyes.—But though he was anxious about her reception of him, yet he was not without hopes : and the pleasure he felt from the great alteration of his friend, helped to keep up his spirits ; he was not so austere in his manner now as formerly ; he seem'd more fond of society ; he was more communicative than heretofore, and seldom or never mentioned the cause of his woe. These symptoms portended a perfect cure: and as Hillaston seldom left him, he had an opportunity of observing his behaviour more accurately, and had the greatest reason to believe the cure of his friend would soon be effected.

At the time he imagined that his Maria was at Mrs. Hillaston's, he went over, and Hillaston along with him : he was much chagrined when he found she was not yet come. However, he did not remain uneasy long, for in about two hours after he arrived there she came, and, in his opinion, looked more lovely than ever. With trembling lips he saluted her, and his voice was scarce audible when he welcomed her into that country again. His heart palpitated high with joy, when he beheld her arrayed in all her charms : but it sunk too, and with it his pleasure, when he saw her introduce a Captain Coates, who had been the companion of her journey, to Mrs. Hillaston's, and the family. The Captain apologised for his visit by assigning the cause of it, which was to conduct Miss Leeson to her friends. Mrs. Hillaston made him welcome, and assured him she was always very glad to see any of
Miss

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Miss Leeson's acquaintance. After these introductory, yet necessary compliments were over, the company subsided into order, and every body seemed pleased: but it was only seeming with poor Rigby, who, at that moment, experienced the bitterest pangs of jealousy. Captain Coates was young, genteel, polite, and tolerably handsome. He possessed that *gaiete de cœur*, and happy assurance which distinguishes the gentlemen of the army in particular, who not only earn laurels from our foes, but also gather them, without much trouble, from our ladies. The less confident Rigby, saw with envy his fallies of pleasantry, and desire to amuse, attended with all the success he could wish; and every smile with which the sprightly Maria applauded any of these, was a dagger to his heart pain'd already to an excess of torment. He disguised his feelings as much as possible, but could not be what he wished.

The Captain, who was every thing that was agreeable, engrossed the attention of the women so much, that Rigby could scarcely squeeze in a word. But if this was displeasing, it was attended with one good circumstance: his silence and reserve was by that means rendered less noticed than they would have otherwise been. Rigby was not displeased when he saw the Captain depart in the evening, whose genius had towered so far above his. He had intreated permission to pay his compliments to the Hillaston family; which had been permitted, with much politeness, before he went away. Rigby thought that did not prophesy any good to him: His diffidence and modesty, the sincerity of his passion, and the honest fear ever attendant on it, prevented his shining so much as the Captain did, whose behaviour he had compared with his own, and always to his own disadvantage. When he went away,

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away, his good humour returned by degrees ; and, with great satisfaction, he did not perceive any alteration in his mistress's behaviour to him. It was his business now, to endeavour to make himself as agreeable as he could to Maria ; and to this intent he summoned up all his powers, and succeeded. The ladies renewed their walks with him,, and found him the entertaining companion they could wish. In the afternoon he asked Miss Leeson if she could play a particular song which he mentioned. She replied, she could. He begged permission to accompany her. She never heard him sing, but would willingly play it. His voice was powerful ; it was manly, but sweet ; and his judgment modulated it with harmony. Maria was very agreeably surprized at his performance. She made him sing again : He obeyed so pleasing an injunction with great readiness. He was more applauded for the repetition than before. While he sung, his eyes were directed to the object of his heart's tenderest wishes : They spoke a language very intelligible ; and the expressions of his voice rendered them more easily understood. Maria was neither so blind, or so stupid, as to pass over this evidence of his continuing love : She noticed it, and her heart rejoiced at this mark of the power of her charms. She wished to ensure the conquest ; for Rigby was by no means disagreeable to her. She indulged him, by playing and singing many favourite songs herself. All was joy and rapture in the poor lover's breast, who could not, however, in the midst of his transports, forget the dreaded Captain, whom he much feared had gained Maria's good opinion. Many were the doubts and surmises he entertained : but still he possessed the same freedom as ever with Miss Leeson ; and that was all he could at present hope for. One thing he was resolved on ; when the Captain returned, as it was to be supposed he would in a few days, that he would
not

not surrender his post so quietly as he had done before, or give his rival any opportunity of entertaining his mistress but in his presence.

The next day the Captain's arrival obliged him to put the resolutions he had formed in practice. Rigby, who had conceived some hopes from the gracious treatment he had met with from Maria, was no longer the timid, bashful, distant man he had been when they were together before. He attached himself as closely, and was as attentive to Maria, as the Captain himself was. He was full of spirits; and, in the course of the conversation, turned the laugh with great success against the Captain. Rigby, who found, upon the trial, that he was not inferior to his rival in the arts of pleasing, forbore to triumph over him, when he had shewn him that he was no despicable enemy. The Captain had sense enough to perceive his moderation; but he did not thank him much for it, nor did he like his particularity to Miss Leeson: but he could not prevent it. He determined not to afford him matter of triumph, and became more reserved and silent. Rigby enjoyed his humiliation, and was more sprightly in consequence of it.

Maria, who saw the contest between her admirers, was not well pleased at it, as she did not know how far it might be carried: and to shew one a greater preference than the other would only be blowing up the flame. She had a prepossession in favour of Rigby, and approved his passion in secret: but till she had known him a little longer, would not venture to disclose her opinion of him. If any altercation should happen between these gentlemen, she foresaw that an explanation must necessarily ensue; and that she wished to avoid, at least for some time: she therefore carried herself so evenly, that neither could boast of her being more inclined to him than the

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the other ; not that she was a coquet, either in disposition or behaviour ; but she feared that they might misconstrue her conduct in their own favour, and, by that means, presuming upon her partiality, proceed to extremities. These considerations did not contribute to her peace.

The Captain, after spending a disagreeable day, though with his mistress, retired, and left his enemy in possession of the field, much against his inclination.

The reserve that Maria had assumed wore off gradually ; and Rigby construed her returning gaiety to his advantage, and drew the most favourable consequences, in his own imagination, from it. However he would not venture to address her, particularly, again, till he should really know the state of her heart ; and, in the mean time, contented himself with rendering her any little service, which chance or design might afford him an opportunity of doing. This attentive behaviour did not pass unnoticed by the family ; and Miss Hillaston joked her friend, in private, on the conquest she had made ; Maria's prudence prevented her even letting her friend into the secrets of her heart, lest her regard for Rigby might induce her to reveal it to her brother, and by that means it should come to his ears, who ought not to hear it at present, or, whom, if her delicacy might be gratified, should only hear it. The pleasure she expressed in Rigby's company made him happy ; and she also received no small degree of satisfaction.

Hillaston had spent two nights with them, and was, besides, to and fro three or four times in the ten days that they had been there, and came early on that morning on which Captain Coates paid his third visit. It was not very agreeable to him as we have observed before, to leave Rigby with Maria : but

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but how could he help himself? Though asked to stay at Mrs. Hillaston's, he could not, with any degree of politeness, accept the invitation upon his slight acquaintance. To remove all his difficulties and uneasinesses, he must make Rigby resign his pretensions,——but how to do that he knew not, unless chance should throw the occasion in his way. In this disposition he alighted at Mrs. Hillaston's. Rigby viewed him in as disagreeable a light; and, in him, saw the only obstruction to his happiness. With this mutual animosity it was no very difficult matter to find an opportunity of expressing it. The day was fine, and a walk in the garden was proposed; they strolled about.—In the course of an entertaining conversation, the Captain let fall some expression which the sprightly Maria could not avoid laughing at. Rigby heightened the ridicule by a sarcastic explanation. The Captain, tho' he could endure the Lady's raillery, would, by no means, stand as the butt of Rigby's wit:——he replied very tartly and contemptuously, and his rival was not behind-hand in returning it. Maria interposed by turning the conversation; and no further notice appeared to be taken of it. As they were going out of the garden, towards the house, the ladies went first; and, as soon as they were in doors, the Captain tap'd Rigby on the shoulder——“A word with you, if you please, Sir.”

“By all means—twenty Sir.”

“You have made use of too many already, Sir; —more than you'll chuse to account for.”

“You are mistaken, Sir; —— I'll render you any account you can demand, when and where you please.”

“'Tis well—I shall be at the town of H——, about five miles from hence, at six o'clock in the morning of the day but one from this.”

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“ I’ll not fail to meet you.—Your weapons and terms ?”

“ Pistols,—and with a friend.”

“ I shall be sure to attend you, and the conqueror takes Miss Leeson.”

“ Agreed.”

They hastened in as fast as they could, lest the ladies should observe their absence : and the two gentlemen disguised the matter so well, and behaved so agreeably, that Maria dismissed every apprehension that she had conceived.

When the Captain went home, Rigby acquainted Hillaston with what had passed, at the same time entreating him to be his friend on this occasion, which he promised. “ Indeed,” said he, “ I expected this from your behaviour—but you may depend upon me.—You shall also have my pistols.”

Rigby gave not the least indication of what had happened ; on the contrary, he made a party to go to view a prospect, particularly beautiful, on that day, if the weather should be fine. The women, who had no suspicion of what was going forward, consented.

In the morning Rigby and his friend repaired to the appointed place, where they met the Captain and a brother officer. Hillaston addressed the parties, and declared his sorrow at their meeting on such an occasion and begged them to consider whether the matter was not to be conciliated.

“ It is impossible,” replied Rigby briskly ; “ Captain Coates is an admirer of the charming Miss Leeson’s. I adore her ; I cannot, I will not resign the possession of her, while I have life, to any man. If the Captain quits his pretensions to her, I am willing to drop this quarrel ; if not, our terms are, that the victor shall take her.”

“ Be

“Be it so then,” answered Coates, “and only on that condition. To give her up tamely would argue a baseness that my blood’s a stranger to.”

“And I,” replied Rigby, “will not suffer any other man to interrupt my happiness.”

The seconds found that nothing could be done. They charged the pistols, marked out the ground, and retired.

The gallantry and courage of the combatants were truly admirable, had they been concerned in any other cause, or shewn it in any other manner, than for their mutual destruction. Though they turned to fire, so determined and so cool were they, that both were wounded. The ball grazed Rigby’s shoulder, and cut part of his neck; and the Captain’s arm was broke. As soon as he received the wound the pistol fell from his hand, and he staggered with the shock. As the distance was eight yards, Rigby was first with him, and supported him in his arms. When the seconds came up, “Sir,” said the Captain, “you have conquered: I resign Miss Leeson to you, well pleased she is fallen into the hands of so brave a man.”

“Sir,” replied Rigby, “I am truly sorry that this is the consequence of our passion: but give me leave to help you to the town, to get some assistance.”

They were not far distant, and they soon got a surgeon, who gave the Captain great hopes that there would be no bad consequences attending it. After he was dressed, Rigby begged a cast of his office; for, he said he found himself grow faint with loss of blood and, stripping his coat and waistcoat, his shirt was all over blood. for, though his wound was but slight, yet it bled very plentifully. However, it was soon dressed, and he felt very little pain from it.

During these operations, Captain Coates observed a ring upon Rigby’s finger, which struck him. He

begged to look at it.—“Pray, Sir,” said he, “if
 “I may with propriety be resolved, how did you
 “come by this?”

“A lady gave it to me, Sir.”

“I believe I am more interested in the question
 “than you imagine. Where does the lady live?”

“In Berkshire, Sir.”

“Her name is now Wilcox.”

“It is.”

“Then, Sir, she is my sister; and I have lifted
 “up my hand against the man in the world I should
 “most respect and honour.”

Rigby stood amazed.

“In this ring, Sir,” continued the Captain re-
 turning it to him, “her hair is mixed with mine;
 “and she told me, when I saw her last, to whom
 “she gave it, and for what service. My passion
 “put your name, and even the recollection of it,
 “out of my head: let me, with my remaining
 “arm, press you to my heart, that beats with gra-
 “titude and thanks to you.”

Rigby returned the embrace with great cordiality:
 and the surgeon, who, not being able to conceive
 the reason why two men, who had met with a de-
 termined resolution to blow one another's brains out,
 should, on a sudden, become so fond, stood dumb
 with surprise.

“I had lamented already, Sir,” said Rigby, “the
 “rashness and fury that urged me to this. But when I
 “consider you as the brother of my very good friend
 “Mrs. Wilcox, I am truly grieved and ashamed.
 “I entreat your forgiveness, Sir, for this injury.”

“It was my fault,” said Coates; “and let it be
 “forgotten. Henceforward, let our hearts be uni-
 “ted.”

Rigby accepted his proffered friendship with joy;
 and having shaking hands together, they depart-
 ed.

It was great matter of surprise to Rigby that, from the time the Captain was brought to the inn where he was dressed, he had seen nothing of Hillaſton—he could not conjecture what was become of him:—but as he had been tolerably well accustomed to his flighty ways, thought nothing extraordinary in his departure. He therefore bent his courſe towards Mrs. Hillaſton's again. It will be neceſſary, in the mean time, to explain the cauſe of Hillaſton's unfriendly proceeding, as it appeared to be. It juſt at that inſtant came into his head, that this was the moſt favourable time for reſolving all his friend's doubts concerning Maria's diſpoſition towards him—the ſcheme ſtruck him, and he ſet out homewards to put it in execution. When he arrived there he found the family waiting breakfast for them; and the two girls, in particular, very anxious to know the cauſe of their ſudden elopement in the morning. When he went into the parlour his ſiſter firſt interrogated him.

“ Lord, brother, where have you been ? ”

“ Don't aſk me,” ſaid he, with a face ſtrongly expreſſive of horror.

“ What's become of Mr. Rigby ? ”

“ Mr. Rigby ! ”

“ Good heaven,” ſaid Maria, “ how came you by that blood on your coat and ſhirt ? ” which he got in helping the Captain.

“ Aye,” ſaid he, making a ſmall pauſe, and looking at it very attentively—“ It is his blood, indeed, poor fellow ! ”

“ Good God ! his blood ! ” and ſhe fell back helpless in the chair.

Hillaſton, his ſiſter, and mother, ran to her aſſiſtance, and ſhe was with difficulty recovered again. When ſhe came to herſelf, and looked at Hillaſton, a ſhower of tears fell from her ſurcharged eyes.

“ For ”

“ For God’s sake, child,” said his mother, “ let us know what is the matter.”

“ It might have been prevented, Madam,” said he, “ if Miss Leeson had made a determination between the gentlemen.”

“ Oh, that I had !” said she, “ and saved a life that is so dear to me—or that doing it now wou’d answer.”

“ Ladies are fond of retaining their admirers about them ; their delicacy or coquetry prevents them from acting according to the dictates of their hearts, and the most dismal consequences attend this unjust proceeding.”

“ If I could recall what’s past, neither should hinder me from avowing my regard for him—But that is all over, and I am wretched.”

“ No, Maria, he is not dead yet,—but he is wounded.”

“ And where is he ?

“ Coming home, I suppose, by this time.”

When she heard that, her shame and confusion almost reduced her to her former state.— “ Oh, Mr. Hillaston,” said she, how could you be so ungenerous as to take advantage of my fears to extort this secret from me.—It is unkind in you—and base and detestable in him to consent to this scheme, unmanly as it is, to terrify me so much. All the esteem I had for him will be converted into hatred and contempt.”

“ You wrong him,” replied he ; “ for I will assure you, in the most solemn manner, he is innocent of this design, nor does he know, at this moment, where I am. If there is any body merits blame, in this matter, it is I.—But my scheme was to know how your heart beat towards him : and I can assure you, Maria, he is truly worthy of your affection. Had you seen him venture his life to
“ assert

“ assert his right to you, perhaps you might have
“ thought more favourably of him.”

“ I should have expired at the sight,” said she—
“ How was it, brother ?”

He related the whole affair to the attentive and terrified females. Maria sat trembling all the while : She was hardly recomposed, when a servant came in to tell Mr. Hillaston that Mr. Rigby wanted him. This threw her into great agitations ; and they were increased, when she saw Hillaston leading him with his pallid face into the parlour, where they were then sitting.

“ Here he is,” said he, “ though not unhurt.”

Rigby, who was persuaded that the matter was a profound secret, blushed up to the eyes, and looked very reproachfully at his friend.

“ You need not accuse me with your eyes, Rigby ;
“ for I have told the whole story : and, if you will
“ believe me, it is the best duel you ever fought in
“ your life.”

“ Lord,” said Mrs. Hillaston, “ I am a very good
“ surgeon ; and you must permit me to look at your
“ wound. I will give you a cordial too, to keep up
“ your spirits. I have the best family plaster in the
“ world ; but, unfortunately, there is none of it
“ spread now. Come along with me, Anna, and
“ help me. Do sit down, and sit quiet, till we re-
“ turn.”

“ Aye, aye, go and help your mother,” said Hilla-
ston to his sister. And as they went out of the room,
added, “ Now comfort Maria, Rigby ; and I will
“ take care that nobody interrupts you.”

He went away, and left them together.

Maria sat, during this conversation, with her hand-
kerchief to her face. When she heard Hillaston’s
words, her agitations increased, and her trepidation
became visible even to Rigby, who was almost in as
bad a state as she was.

“ I much

“ I much fear, Miss Leeson, that my friend’s imprudence, in betraying this unhappy affair, has made you uneasy ; believe me, when I assure you, that I would rather die than offend you.”

“ Indeed, Mr. Rigby, I am very sorry for the——”

“ By heaven, I would rather that every drop of my blood had been spilt, than create you trouble ; and in the same cause too I would willingly——”

“ Oh,” said she, interrupting him, “ if you knew how wretched you have made me !”

“ Would to God then I had been killed ! but my grief will soon destroy me.”

“ Oh, do not talk so,” said the tender Maria, the tears yet streaming from her eyes ; “ why do you wish to distress me ? My affliction might shew you, that your life is not indifferent to me.”

“ Unmerited goodness !—On my knees let me thank you for it. Yet add more to it, and say you wish me to preserve it.”

“ I do, I do : but pray take something ; you look very ill.”

“ Your kindness will more completely effect my cure, than all the medicines on earth.”

“ Let me intreat you, rise,” said she, and take some relief, if you regard me.”

“ I will shew it by my obedience to your desire, lovely Maria.”

He printed a lovely kiss on her hand, and rose.

During this conversation, Hillaston opposed all the attempts of his mother and sister to enter, and apply the remedies they had prepared. He maintained, that Rigby would receive more benefit from Maria’s acknowledgment of her regard, than their plasters. All his mother’s remonstrances were ineffectual, till Rigby came to the door, and opened it.

After making him swallow a cordial, which revived his spirits, she insisted on seeing his neck. And all his opposition, which arose from politeness, was in vain.

She

She told him, in her leisure hours she had made that part of surgery, which relates to the curing of green wounds, her study. He was obliged to submit; and the two young ladies retired during the operation. Hillaſton and his mother only remained: and the good Lady, while ſhe was dreſſing him, which it muſt be confeſſed ſhe did very judiciously, read her patient a lecture on his conduct, and ſhewed him the ſin and folly of ſuch partial engagements. Good and prudent as this advice was, and reaſonable as her reprehensions were, Rigby's mind was too much employed in thinking of the delightful confeſſion his Maria had made him, to pay much attention to this grave rebuke; though he had the greateſt opinion of Mrs. Hillaſton's good ſenſe. As ſoon as opportunity offered, he acquainted Hillaſton with his happineſs. His friend heard the account he gave him with a great deal of pleaſure.

“Rigby, my dear Rigby,” ſaid he with a ſigh,
“may you be bleſſed to the extent of your wiſhes:
“as for me, I can never know peace. I thought I
“ſhould be of ſervice to you, by that abrupt manner of introducing your duel; and I was not deceived. It has procured an explanation of her ſentiments. You will be happy in her affections.
“I muſt go from hence,” added he: “In three days
“I ſhall return to you again.”

Rigby beheld with great concern the alteration in his manner of ſpeaking to him on this ſubject. He feared he was going to relapſe. He ſaw the ſame ſtern melancholy again aſſume the place on his brow, and the ſame diſregard of himſelf return.

In his abſence the happy Rigby failed not to improve the good opinion Maria had of him; and as he could, without fear, impart to her the ſentiments of his heart, he acquainted her with the ſincerity and violence of his paſſion. As his deſigns were of the moſt honourable nature, he talked to her, in thoſe
private

private conversations they held, of the prospect of their future union. He informed her of his circumstances and views in life.

“ With me, charming Maria, you will not be possessed of grandeur or pomp ; but in their room we will substitute happiness and content : and, if it will not disgust you to become a country parson’s wife, you may enjoy all the bliss that retirement, and my assiduous endeavours to please, can procure you.”

“ Indeed, Mr. Rigby, if I could not promise myself happiness in spending my life with you, I had not gone so far as I have done. But how this scheme of ours may be completed, I know not. I have no fortune independent of my father ; and I doubt very much whether we should meet his approbation : without it I could not think of taking such a step. Though he is my father, yet I cannot be blind to his character, nor a stranger to his disposition. He is severe and inflexible in his notions of honour, and upon all occasions very jealous of his own. As he considers himself the head of the family, he demands the most implicit obedience from his wife and children : but he is a good and a tender father, and loves us all with the most paternal affection. How then can I venture to disoblige him ? or, if done without his knowledge, how should I find means to be reconciled to him afterwards ? It would be totally impossible. Upon such an occasion he would be deaf to all persuasions and arguments, and be hurried away by his passions ; which I assure you, are very violent.”

“ And what do you think the most likely method to obtain his approbation, which I would not have you neglect ; though, perhaps, he may never consent to our union ?”

“ Time

“ Time must bring it about, and we must wait
“ with patience till then : some lucky accident may
“ happen that will befriend us.”

Thus the amiable lovers anticipated time in their eager hopes, and satisfied of mutual regard, spent their hours in the bosom of felicity.

On the third day, according to his promise, Hillaston arrived, but he was no longer the easy sociable companion he had been : his unhappy flame burned more fiercely, and tended more immediately to his destruction. Rigby requested to know if he had any fresh cause of uneasiness and entreated him to tell him the reason of the great alteration that appeared in him. He answered not, but sighed and shook his head.

Rigby, to divert his attention, told him how matters stood between him and Maria : but that only served to encrease his grief. “ Unhappy wretch that I am,” said he, “ when even the pleasures of my friends but serve to augment my pain : I have no business any longer in this world, where I cannot enjoy any thing in it.”

Rigby strove to compose his mind, and to reason with him, but all in vain : he was insensible to every thing but his own torment. His stay was very short. At his departure he shook hands with Rigby very affectionately, and told him it would be a long time before he should see him again. He waited not for a reply, but strode away. Rigby was very uneasy at his demeanour, for he now seemed worse than ever ; but he concealed those suspicions from Mrs. Hillaston, who still conceived hopes that her son would be restored to his senses and former composure by keeping Rigby company. Maria perceived the gloom which this conversation had cast on her lover's spirits, and he was obliged to assign as a reason, to satisfy her tender enquiries, that he feared his friend would break rout again into
his

his former madness, but requested her to be secret. Maria spared no pains to allure him from those melancholy reflections: she succeeded, and all was happiness and pleasure. The next day an express came to him forwarded by one of his friends at Cambridge. It was from Mr. Wilkins—Mrs. Rigby was dying, and wanted to see her son—He determined to set off directly to take a mother's last blessing whom he so truly honoured and loved: however he had a private interview with his Maria, who shed a tear at her lover's distress—Time pressed him, and would not permit the utterance of those tender things which their hearts were fraught with. He asked leave to write to her, which she granted, and kindly promised to answer his letters, which were to be sent to her under cover to Miss Hillaston, who would convey them to her. Their tears flowed mutually as they separated, and he hurried away. He used all possible expedition in hopes of seeing his mother before she died. When he alighted at Mr. Wilkins's door, the worthy man ran out to him and told him his mother was yet alive, but that it was very doubtful how long she would continue so. He led the afflicted young man up to the chamber, where the poor woman lay in the agonies of death. She seemed to have retained her life to see him before she closed her eyes for ever. The women about her informed her of her son's arrival, and she turned her head towards him stretching out her hand. Rigby threw himself upon his knees, and kissing her almost chilled lips, bathed her face with his tears.

“ It is a great satisfaction to me, my dear boy,
 “ to see you once more before I die—I must
 “ now render you justice; let me be alone with my
 “ son.”

The attendants left the room, and Rigby only remained with her.

“ I have

“ I have not many moments to live,” said she, her voice so low and broken that she could scarcely be heard or understood, and must inform you of one great secret that nearly concerns you. But I should ask your forgiveness for the imposition.— My God forgive me !—My speech fails me—I am not your mother, though you took me for such —Farmer Wilkins will tell.”

Here she was interrupted by the hand of death ; and though she still endeavoured to speak, nothing could be understood.

Rigby, who was struck dumb with astonishment and grief, had scarcely power to call for help. But they could give no assistance. She retained his hand in hers, till she breathed her last, which soon happened. Rigby left the room, overcome with affliction. But the extraordinary information he had learned, still engaged his attention more than any thing else. Mr. Wilkins, from whom he was to receive the satisfaction he expected, and his whole family, among whom Mrs. Rigby was very much loved, were in great grief on account of this melancholy event. As soon as it had subsided a little, he sought him out.—“ Mr. Wilkins,” said he, “ I have been bred up in your family, and not knowing the happiness of having a father, have always esteemed you in that light. Your behaviour has not left me the least room to doubt your friendship and regard for me. I hope that you will not differ from your former conduct now. That worthy woman, who now lies dead, informed me, with her parting breath, that she was not my mother. She added, that you would tell me this secret, which, you must suppose, I am very anxious to know the truth of. For God’s sake then, ease my heart, and let me know how I came to pass for her son.”

“ Oh

“ Oh my God !” said he, “ clapping his hands together—“ Poor woman, why was this unhappy
“ affair now revealed, only to create this young
“ man uneasiness !”

“ You can remove it all, my friend, by clearing up
“ this mystery to me. Be assured that the future
“ happiness or misery of my life depends upon it :
“ then inform me, I beseech you, and ease my la-
“ bouring heart.”

“ Ah, Mr. Rigby, that’s an impossibility. I am
“ bound in the most solemn manner.”

“ There are no ties, Mr. Wilkins’s, replied the
youth hastily, “ that should prevent your informing
“ me who the authors of my being are.—Your
“ concealment may be attended with more danger-
“ ous and dreadful consequences to us all, than the
“ violation of your engagement, however sacred,
“ can be to you.”

“ I do not think that : nor can I, or will I open
“ my mouth to you about it, till I have permis-
“ sion.”

“ How long will it be till that is obtained ?”

“ It may be some time.”

“ Heaven and earth !” cried he, in an agony of
grief—“ my soul has been unacquainted with af-
“ fliction until this moment ; and now the torrent
“ overwhelms me. It is not to be borne. Why
“ am I the only man in the world reserved for such
“ piercing woe ! Am I the issue of some lawless
“ amour ? Will the shame of my parents arise in
“ beholding me ? But where are they ? Who are
“ they ?” added he, throwing himself on his knees
to Wilkins—“ Thus humbly I implore you to relieve
“ my impatience, and inform me of this dreadful
“ mystery.”

The good old farmer was extremely affected at
this address. He pitied, and felt for this young
man’s

man's grief. The tears paced each other down his cheeks, while he sat silent before him.

"I see," continued Rigby, "that my situation afflicts you—Be generous and kind enough to inform me of my origin."

"Do not press me—I must repeat to you, though sorry that I am obliged to do so, that it is not possible."

"Cruel and barbarous wretch!" said he, starting up, "to refuse me this small satisfaction."

"Be a little patient, Mr. Rigby; I will use my utmost endeavours to satisfy you, and as soon as may be. Be a little quiet, till I can save my own conscience harmless, and satisfy you."

"Peace and quiet are, and will be, strangers to me, till this affair is cleared up."

Rigby left Wilkins's presence, who had treated him very ill, as he thought, in not complying with his request. All was torment in his breast, and confusion in his brain, which was pained almost to madness. Time made his transports subside a little, and Wilkins took an opportunity of telling him that this matter was known to nobody in the world except himself and wife; and that he might depend upon it he would take the earliest opportunity of giving him every satisfaction in his power. This was all that he could obtain; and with this he must, *perforce*, be contented.

Great though his grief was on this extraordinary situation of his affairs, yet he received some consolation in writing to his Maria, she was punctual in returning an answer to his letter, in which she informed him that she should return home the next day, having been sent for, but should be glad to hear from him, as soon as convenient when he intended to go into that country, and she would contrive to meet him at Mrs. Hillaston's.

This

This kind and unexpected token of the charming girl's regard, gave him great pleasure ; and he determined to return to Cambridge as soon as he could, as he was to take his degree in a short time. He failed not to impart this resolution to her, and spoke with rapture at the thoughts of meeting her again. Before he left Berkshire he went to pay Mrs. Wilcox a visit. She received him with pleasure ; and seeing her in mourning, told her, he hoped that she had not such a melancholy cause as he had for that dress.

“ Indeed, Sir, we have lost a very good friend in Mr. Bennet.”

“ Mr. Bennet ! — Good God ! his appearance promised long life.”

“ It did so ; but an accident shortened his days. He hurt something in his inside, by a fall from his horse, which was beyond the art of the physicians to cure. He has acted very generously by us ; and we have reason to honour his memory.”

“ He was a very worthy man, indeed : but how does his amiable daughter bear her loss ?”

“ Very badly. We thought that she would never have recovered the shock ; nor can his estate, which he has made her sole heiress of, at all compensate, in her opinion, the want of so good and tender a parent.”

“ I pity her condition sincerely ; and know, from the similarity of my situation, what she must feel.”

“ She is now with me, but in a very weak and low state ; and I think you are the fittest person to console her. The loss of our parents is very shocking.”

“ I know it, Madam, by sad experience ; for I have lost a mother,”

“ I have heard so.”

A pause ensued ; and Mrs. Wilcox wanted to inform Rigby of the state of her cousin's heart.

The

The regard she had for him, and the little hopes she saw of his returning it, had preyed upon her spirits, before her father had met that accident which increased her grief. Mrs. Wilcox really loved and esteemed Rigby, as well for the good qualities she saw him possess, as for the services he had rendered her, which had occasioned her present happiness. She therefore thought it would be no breach of trust in her, to acquaint him with the state of Miss Bennet's heart, if by that means she could promote her felicity. During the pause in the conversation, she was contriving how she should bring it about.

"My cousin," said she, "will be a very good match now for any body."

"I am sure she will render any man happy who is blessed with her hand : for she possesses all those virtues which can render the state of matrimony really happy."

"I think so myself : and I know a young gentleman on whom she should willingly bestow her hand and fortune : If I do not mistake, she has yielded him her heart long ago."

"He is surely a favourite of fortune. But is he acquainted with his felicity?"

"No ; he knew nothing of it till this moment."

Rigby blushed, and looked very confused ; but remained silent, with his eyes cast down to the floor.

"It is very true," continued Mrs. Wilcox, "what I have told you : and, had I not known you to be a man of honour, it should have remained an impenetrable secret till the end of time. Besides, I have experienced your friendship for me, and have been truly benefited by it. The least return I can make is, to point out to you the road to happiness, if you can follow it, with Lydia. The last service you did her has penetrated deeply into her

“ her heart, which feels a tenderer passion than
 “ gratitude for you. Make a good use of this infor-
 “ mation, and let her not have the most distant sus-
 “ picion of my having told you the secret of her
 “ heart ; which, rather than have thus revealed to
 “ you, I am sure she would have preferred almost to
 “ die.—A fine girl with two thousand pounds a
 “ year is not to be met with every day.”

Rigby was at a loss how to answer this speech :
 at last he found words.

“ Madam, your conduct deserves my heartiest,
 “ my sincerest thanks ; and they are all I
 “ have to return for your goodness. This circum-
 “ stance, which you have now acquainted me with,
 “ shall never escape my lips. At any time I should
 “ deem myself unworthy of the honour of possessing
 “ Miss Bennet’s hand : but now it is impossible. To
 “ explain this, it is necessary that I should inform
 “ you, my heart and vows are already engaged to
 “ another, who returns them. I am exceedingly un-
 “ happy for your cousin, and truly respect her. But
 “ we cannot command our inclinations.”

“ We cannot indeed.—Hapless Lydia ! your case
 “ is truly pitiable.”

Mrs. Wilcox judged it better that Rigby should
 not see Miss Bennet, who was then in a bad state of
 health : but bidding him be secret, wished him a
 good journey, as he informed her he was going to
 leave the country in a day or two : and he depart-
 ed.

In his way to Cambridge he could not help ap-
 plauding himself, for the sacrifice he had made to
 Maria.

“ Poverty,” said he, “ with that dear girl, would
 “ bepreferable to affluence with another.—Miss Ben-
 “ net is truly amiable ; I am sensible of her perfecti-
 “ ons : but shall I sell myself, or be base enough to
 “ give

“ give my hand, where my heart cannot accompany it ! No ; to thee, charming Maria, I dedicate my life, and in thy service will I spend it.”

With this reflection did he beguile the way, every step of which led him nearer to the spot where he should see Maria.

The promise which Wilkins had made him to unravel that mysterious conduct, which they had preserved, had in part quieted him ; though he was far from being easy about it.

He arrived at Cambridge, and wrote to Miss Leeson, inclosing the letter to Miss Hillaston, to acquaint her that he was arrived, and would go to Mrs. Hillaston's, when she appointed the time.—The day after this was dispatched, a large packet was delivered into his hands.—He broke it open.—In it was a letter directed to him, and a parcel also addressed to him sealed with three seals.—He could not tell what to make of it : but opening the letter it soon explained the whole affair. He read thus :

“ It is all over, Rigby ; my dear friend, the scenes of my past life vanish before my sight, and I only look forward to the peaceful haven whither I go to enjoy a quiet and rest, that the peculiarity of my unhappy fate denied me here. Blame me not, my friend, nor treat my memory with reproach. Is it an act of cowardice to escape from ills which cannot be supported ? I have endeavoured to take thy advice—I struggled with the guilty the unnatural passion, but all my efforts were vain—like a bow long bent, it flew back with redoubled violence, and I must sink under it. The contest can be no longer maintained, and I must yield to superior force. A life of torment to end in suicide, cannot be shocking. But this is a secret to all the world : nor do thou reveal it. The deadly potion is by my side, I look

“ on it with pleasure, as the means of restoring me
 “ to peace. The reflection that repose yet awaits
 “ me, affords me more satisfaction than I have
 “ known this long time. I will employ this calm
 “ moment then in acquainting you with my affairs.

“ With this you receive my will, of which I have
 “ constituted you executor, along with my mother,
 “ requesting you to accept of three thousand pounds
 “ for the trouble I have given you. The rest of my
 “ fortune I leave to my sister. My mother has an
 “ exact copy of it, and I am convinced the validity
 “ of it will never be disputed. I make it my last
 “ request to you to visit my unhappy mother, and
 “ comfort her : but let my fate be an entire secret
 “ to her, nor embitter the remainder of her days by
 “ the knowledge of my crimes.

“ This was my last, my only business on earth. I
 “ have swallowed the draught that is to confer eter-
 “ nal quiet on me. The subtil potion already has
 “ mixed with my blood ; it chills and curdles in my
 “ frigid veins. It is beyond human art to afford me
 “ a remedy now—I am already numbered with the
 “ dead. If I have committed an error, do thou,
 “ Father of mercy, forgive and pardon me. Let
 “ the words of peace cheer my struggling soul in its
 “ last agonies ; and let the promises of bliss gild the
 “ horrors of dissolution with hope. I wish I could
 “ once more embrace you, my friend : but that
 “ wish is vain ; for the distance between us is great
 “ at this time, and, before you receive this, the
 “ hand that writes it will be cold and lifeless.

“ Rigby, the man who is your friend, and takes
 “ this last opportunity of assuring you of his regard,
 “ descends to the grave in early life : but his mis-
 “ fortunes make him think what is past as long as
 “ an age. I go to sleep with my fathers, and leave
 “ a world that has been productive of nothing but
 “ misery to me. I die, Rigby, the victim of an incest-

“ tuous

“tuous and unnatural passion, that renders me un-
 “fit to live.—Life was wretched, and even death
 “appears full of horror and despair. But the reso-
 “lution is taken, and I must depart. The king of
 “terrors calls me, and I obey his summons. I de-
 “lay but to assure you, with my last breath, that
 “I am still

“Your sincere and wretched friend,

“RICHARD HILLASTON.”

Rigby's blood ran cold as he read the horrid epif-
 tle ; it fell from his hands when he finished it. He
 threw himself into a chair, frozen with horror. For
 a long time he remained almost insensible. At last
 he found his speech and attained his reason.—

“Wretched indeed!” exclaimed he—“What mad-
 “ness! What desperation! Unhappy man! What
 “could have tempted thee to sin thus? And why
 “wouldst thou remove so far from me, that I can-
 “not have the satisfaction of performing the last
 “duties to thy remains! Thou art no more. My
 “generous, my worthy friend, thou art no more.
 “But thy memory shall be ever dear to me. I will
 “cherish it to my latest hour.”

The tear of distress started from his eye, as he
 thus lamented his friend. The sigh of affliction rent
 his bosom ; he remained overwhelmed with grief.
 He retired early to bed, for he wanted rest, yet
 none could he find. When sleep closed his eyes,
 the most horrible dreams were presented to his dis-
 turbed fancy, and the lifeless, the self-murdered
 Hillaston, was always the subject of them. And so
 much more shocking were these terrible images
 rendered by his confused imagination, that he
 was glad to be awake, to enjoy a sober reality
 of facts, grievous and mournful though such reflec-
 tions were. For two days he stirred not out—he
 remained

remained in a state of dejection and melancholy, that was truly pitiable. But what encreased his uneasiness and affliction was, how he should acquaint a fond sister and a tender mother of his dreadful fate. He determined, at all events to obey his friend's injunctions, and conceal the truth of the affair from them. Accordingly, in a few days he wrote a letter to Mrs. Hillaston, in which he broke the matter to her in a most tender and consolatory manner; and told her, that her son died of a fever, which was so violent in its course, that he expired in a few days—and promised to pay her a visit very soon; informing her of his being left joint executor with her.

Melancholy were his thoughts and heart-rending his reflections of the state of his affairs at that time. It seemed as if all the misfortunes he was doomed to suffer were collected together, and discharged at once on him, to make the stroke more dreadful. The uncertainty of his birth, and his ignorance of his family, went near to his heart: the death of his friend, whom he sincerely loved, in such a violent manner, affected him very strongly. Miss Bennet returned to his imagination: he pitied her; and, what to a thousand young men would have afforded pleasure and excited vanity, was the cause of great uneasiness to him. Maria, the cure for all his woes, then appeared; and, in the prospect of happiness with her, all other considerations were drowned. In a few days he found a letter from Miss Leeson, informing him that she should be at Mrs Hillastons on a particular day, which she named. He was determined to meet her; but, that his being there might appear more like chance than design, he sent word to Mrs. Hillaston, that he would do himself the honour of paying her a visit, as well to offer her his compliments of condolence, as to have the will read. Accordingly he went, and he dreaded meeting the ladies. It was truly melancholy; but he mingled his tears with

with theirs, and was still more endeared to them. He offered to resign the trust his friend reposed in him, and the legacy ; but Mrs. Hillaston insisted on his retaining the latter, and requested the favour of him to act as their friend, and open the will. He promised to obey them. The old lady told him with tears, that he must now be a son to her, and a brother to her daughter.

They spent a melancholy afternoon together ; but Rigby found the ladies more composed and resigned than he imagined. He was very much pleased at it ; and the affection they both expressed for him, made him interested in their happiness. The next day he had the great satisfaction to see his dear Maria arrive. The family wanted a friend to console them ; and who so proper as the sensible, the compassionate Maria ? Though a great part of her time was taken up in rendering those little friendly services to the Hillastons, yet did the lovers find an opportunity to speak in private, and reveal the tender sentiments of their virtuous hearts. In her presence Rigby found the agitations of his soul subside, and peace, with halcyon wing, returned once more.

Three days had passed already, and only marked with encreasing happiness to Rigby, who enjoyed, in his Maria's vows of constancy, all his heart wished for. On the fourth, as they were sitting together alone, talking of that union that was to render them both blessed, and the ardent lover had claimed a willing kiss from the lips of his Maria, they heard a noise. — She turned pale — “ What ails you, my love ? ” said the anxious Rigby.

“ I know that voice : it is my mother's. Here she is.”

As she spoke Mrs. Leeson burst into the room, with a wildness of aspect that terrified her daughter almost to death. They both arose at her approach.

"Sir," said she, addressing herself to Rigby, "what is your name?"

"Thomas Rigby, Madam."

"Is your mother alive?"

"No, Madam; I mourn for her at this moment?"

"From what part of England did you come, Sir?"

"From Berkshire, Madam."

"One question more, Sir. Do you know Farmer Wilkins?"

"I was bred in his family, Madam," answered Rigby, who was astonished at her eagerness, and the terror of her countenance.

"My God! my God!" exclaimed she, clasping her hands together, "what will become of me!—and of you too, unhappy young man!—There stands my daughter, and you are my son."

The dreadful sounds were more than Rigby could support: He fell prostrate and senseless on the floor.



B O O K IX.

THE hapless Rigby fell senseless and prostrate on the floor. The tender and virtuous sensibility of the delicate Maria was roused to excess of agony; and she sunk in a swoon into the arms of her distracted mother. That wretched mother, almost lifeless herself, yet was not wanting in her care to relieve her offspring. Her screams brought assistance; and Miss Hillaston, who first entered the room,

room, saw with horror the scene of distress. She called up the servant, who helped her to raise up Rigby. He was yet insensible ; and having struck his nose, in the fall, against the floor, the lower part of his face was covered with blood. Mrs. Leeson, when she saw him in that condition, felt all the mother arise in her bosom. Her internal feelings convinced her of the identity of his person : and the looks of the pallid youth brought the much-loved, long-lamented Kingley fresh to her remembrance. In Miss Hillaston's care she left Maria, who was recovered and roused to life by her mother's screams, to go to her son's assistance. The more she viewed him, the stronger she found the resemblance of his father in him ; and that served but to encrease her tenderness. She cleansed his face, and in a little time he recovered his reason : He opened his languid eyes ; and turning them alternately on his mother and sister, raised a deep groan, and closed them again.

" He is gone," exclaimed Mrs. Leeson, " he is gone for ever !"

The tears burst from her eyes as she spoke.

Miss Hillaston and her mother, who by this time reached the room where they were, stood amazed at this sight. No lady in the country had preserved a better character than Mrs. Leeson, not more for her good sense and exemplary behaviour, than the management of her family and her domestic virtues. This appearance of such extraordinary distress in three persons whom they had the greatest reason to think well of, alarmed and surprised them : it was not more shocking than unaccountable—The servant retired at her mistress's command and an universal silence ensued. Mrs. Leeson stood between her son and daughter, leaning on the back of his chair ; her face covered with her handkerchief, to hide the flood of tears that could

not be dried up.—Every thing that passed in her bosom contributed to her sorrow.

The poor Maria knew not what to think ; and she could hardly credit what gave her so much pain. Her distress at this discovery was inexpressible, tho' at the same time she returned silent thanks to heaven for bringing it about.

In Rigby's brain all was horror : he compared his present situation with that of his late self-slaughtered friend ; and he found himself treading the very path that led him to destruction. The thought was the excess of agony : He opened his eyes ; he saw on one hand the cause of his friend's death, on the other the object of his own guilty passion : his reason almost forsook him. But in this pause he so far recollected himself, as to desire to know the history of his mother ; and the cause of her totally relinquishing him, and concealing herself from his knowledge. —It was a dreadful mystery ; but nevertheless he determined to have it unravelled, though the consequence should be destruction. So great an impression had his friend's fate made upon his mind, that he thought there could not be a state more wretched than that which resembled his. This resolution taken, he concluded his mother would not refuse him this satisfaction : but, as he had reason to apprehend a discovery of this transaction would not be proper, or even agreeable to her, before Mrs. and Miss Hillafton, he rose from his chair, and went towards them, where they yet stood silent spectators of this scene. His knees trembled as he walked : his voice failed him as he attempted to speak ; it faltered when he found utterance. He addressed his friends.

“ I see, ladies, the uneasiness this extraordinary appearance of sorrow has given you. Your humanity and compassion are interested in our behalf,

half, and you are affected by our misfortunes. You have experienced sufficient adversity yourselves, to pity others in a like situation. Let us not distress you too far. The wounds that Providence has given you are hardly healed yet: let not our woes make them break out afresh. Let my request be prevailed on, to retire, till we shall be a little more composed, and you have recollected yourselves from the surprize which this has thrown you into."

"Ah, Mr. Rigby!" replied the old lady, "the sacred secrecy of misfortune should never be violated. I pity, I love, I wish to relieve you. You have comforted me in my afflictions. May the peace of the righteous ever attend you! Come, Anna, come."

They quitted the room with tearful eyes. When this unhappy family were left to themselves, Rigby's agitations, which seemed to have been suppressed in the presence of Mrs. and Miss Hillaston burst forth. He turned towards his yet weeping mother.

"Thus long deprived of the comfort of a mother's blessing, now to find that mother to whom really my affections are due, gives me a degree of happiness. But to find her thus, fills my heart with sorrow and my soul with woe. Yet," said he, casting himself on his knees before her, "let me thus humbly implore thy benediction, and do thou receive the assurances of my duty and affection. And if it be not an impenetrable mystery, condescend to inform me, why, since honoured with that endearing appellation of son, you have so long concealed yourself from my knowledge, or withdrawn your natural protection from me? What had my father done, that you should forsake his child? or what crimes had my unoffending innocence committed, that you should abandon me?"

The wretched mother turned her eyes on her suppliant child. His voice, his look, the questions he asked, roused every tender and painful sensation in her bosom. The conflict was too mighty to be supported by her, and she fell into her son's arms. The groan she gave awaked Maria from the state of stupor and insensibility in which she had long sat. She flew to her mother's assistance. The drops, which had been fortunately left in the room, contributed to restore her, without disturbing the family again. Maria, and her brother, placed her in the chair, and their endeavours to call her to life succeeded. Her head was reclined on her daughter's bosom on one side, and her afflicted son yet remained on his knee, with his hand on hers, on the other. "I will speak, if I can," said she in a faint voice; "I will endeavour to give you every satisfaction. Yes, you are my child, my much-loved son, the fruits of my first love. In me behold your wretched mother; and, if ye, my children, are unhappy, your mother is the occasion it.—Would to Heaven that all the woe fell on me alone, who am only guilty, and ye, my innocent offspring, were not to suffer.—But," said she, sinking on her knees her eyes and hands cast up to Heaven, "thy will, gracious God, be done.—Pure and Eternal Fountain of Truth, forgive and pardon me.—My soul is humbled before thee; and bitter as the cup is which I now must drink, I acknowledge thy justice, and my own presumption.—Yet, Father of Mercies, let me, me only, bear this load of woe, and spare these children who have sinned not.—I kiss the rod with which I am chastened, and adore the hand that punishes me.—Mine is the crime, on me let thy anger fall.—Yet who shall abide it?" Her words her looks, bespoke the emotions of her soul.—Rigby feared they might overcome her.

—"Much

“Much honoured parent, compose your distracted mind, nor thus distress us, already too much afflicted. Resume your seat, and trust to the goodness of that God, whose darling attribute is mercy, and who styles himself the Father of Mankind. But let us, thy children, know wherein thou hast offended ; and why thou, who art esteemed so much for thy virtues, shouldest thus accuse thyself of crimes which our souls shudder to think of.—Despair and impenitence are too near a kin, and should be equally dreaded.—Beloved author of my being, cease to grieve us beyond measure, in making us thus the unhappy witnesses of those dreadful transports.”

As he spoke he raised, and placed her in the chair.—“Yet permit,” said she, “in the fulness of my soul, to petition heaven for a blessing on thee ; that blessing which thou wantest.”

With humble reverence the pious youth bowed before her, as she laid her trembling hand upon his head——“May the God of nature accord thee his blessing, my child, as I now do mine ; may he crown thee with happiness, and give peace to thy days !”

She seated herself, her eyes yet swimming in tears ; and Rigby, at her desire, placed himself in a chair by her on one side, and the sensible, the weeping Maria, on the other.—“Be comforted, my child,” said the unhappy parent, turning to her, and taking her by the hand——“weep not, nor add to my woe, by shewing me thy distresses—I am going to relate my history ; it will be a lesson and a good one, to you—I have every thing to hope from your virtues, my dearest Maria ; and though it may fill me with shame to repeat my follies and crimes before my children, yet it is part of my merited punishment, and is only an act of contrition.”

“trition.—You will learn from my relation two
 “things that a disingenuous concealment of truth
 “from those who have a right to know every thing
 “concerning you, is attended with the most dange-
 “rous consequences : and that, to scorn the admo-
 “nitions of parental tenderness, is but the beginning
 “of woe.—It is true, my son, that I have endeav-
 “oured to preserve that character and honour which
 “is the greatest ornament of a woman. But the
 “approbation of the world, without the concurrent
 “testimony of my own heart, availed me little.
 “Yet such was my presumption, and such my opi-
 “nion of my own prudence, that I concluded my-
 “self safe from any misfortunes which might arise
 “from my former misconduct. But the hand of
 “Heaven is visible in my punishment ; and I submit,
 “with fear and trembling, to its justice.”

The good lady began her tale, which she related
 with great exactness. As she declared she had been
 privately married to Mr. Kingsley, she from thence
 took an opportunity of giving her daughter some
 wholesome and judicious precepts for her conduct in
 life. When she came to his sudden and unexpected
 death, she could not refrain from tears. She lament-
 ed it, as though it had happened but the preceding
 day ; and her affectionate son paid the tribute of
 duty to his father's memory. These matters the
 reader is already acquainted with, and therefore a
 repetition would be needless. But we shall in this
 case, as we have once before done, take the pen in
 our own proper person, and explain to the reader
 how Miss Wakefield became Mrs. Leeson, and what
 was the cause of her sudden and unexpected appea-
 rance at Mrs. Hillaston's.

After the death of her father, Miss Wakefield had
 full employment for near four months, in getting her
 affairs settled, which diverted, in some measure, the
 melancholy

melancholy of her mind. The impression Mr. Kingsley's death had made on her was never to be erased ; but time, with lenient hand, had calmed her sorrows, and deprived her grief of its poignancy. The sober doctrines of adversity had helped to improve both her manner and understanding. Severe as the lessons of that dreaded school are, yet they are sometimes found necessary. The event of her father's death came on by slow and visible steps ; and thus gradually prepared for his approaching dissolution, the shock was greatly lessened. The effect which this experience of affliction had on her person, was rather to her advantage. The lively smartness of her fine eyes, for she had very fine ones, was agreeably softened, and they habitually expressed a mind at once deserving of pity, and full of consolation. That strain of tenderness was visible in her manner, and rendered her an object worthy regard. Some part of the Doctor's estate lay in Suffolk ; and Mr. Wroughton, an old and intimate friend of the late Doctor's, whom he made one of his executors (a trust which he refused to accept of, assuring Miss Wakefield that he would, nevertheless, be as attentive to her interest as if he had taken the execution of the will upon him) advised her to go into Suffolk, to inspect the matters there herself, which were in some little confusion, promising to accompany her. He proposed this jaunt not more for the sake of her pecuniary interest, than a desire to amuse and entertain her. And, indeed, he exerted himself with parental tenderness, to render every thing easy and agreeable to her. Mr. Wroughton, who had all that hilarity and facetiousness which is attendant on an healthy old age, whose judgment had been matured by experience and time, proved the instructive and pleasing companion of her journey. Their destination was to Bury St. Edmund's, beyond which this estate lay. They arrived there without any accident

cident, and went to the house of the late Doctor's attorney, with whom they were pressed to stay while their business detained them in that country; which invitation they accepted. It was particularly pleasing to Miss Wakefield to reside in his family during that time, as his wife was an agreeable woman, and it was more consistent with her character. The next day Mr. Chalmers, the attorney, appointed the gentleman who had purchased the estate on which the late Doctor had a mortgage, to meet him at his house, and dine with the young lady. Mr. Leeson attended at the time; and, as Miss Wakefield entirely confided in Mr. Wroughton, and her attorney, she left them to settle every thing between them, concerning the affair then in agitation.

When Mr. Leeson was introduced to Miss Wakefield before dinner, he was much struck with her appearance. There was something in her countenance that interested him: he was pleased with her manner, and he was charmed with her good sense. Mr. Leeson, at this time, was about thirty years of age, was handsome, well shaped, and agreeable in his deportment. He had not the advantage of a liberal education, but had improved himself much by reading; had strong natural parts, and a retentive memory: he had good sense, yet was diffident of himself, and was rather reserved. What contributed to this was a disappointment he had met in the early part of his life, from a lady whom he had paid his addresses to, and who had given him a flattering reception; but she was a coquette, and married another, who was richer than him. This almost distracted him, and he retired from the world in a fit of disgust. He was naturally passionate: this adventure soured his temper, and rendered him more impatient than ever. He had very true notions of honour and justice, but he rather strained them too much; and, as he advanced in years, grew very inflexible.

flexible in them. He improved the estate which his father had left him, in those hours which he thus secluded himself from the converse of the world; and a relation having left him a considerable sum of money, he found he could make a good purchase of this estate, in which the late Doctor Wakefield had been concerned, and accordingly bought it. Thus did Mr. Leeson come to the sight of Miss Wakefield. Many girls in the country had set their caps at Mr. Leeson, for he was reputed rich, and that was charm enough; but they had always the mortification to find their pains all thrown away, for he regarded them not. His sensations were very different when he beheld Miss Wakefield. He perceived that the symptoms of his former passion were returning on him. He was chagrined at the thought, and strove, by the reflection of the bad treatment he had already met with, to dissipate them. He strove in vain. All the time he was out of her sight was spent in contemplating her charms, and he longed to return to view them again. He did so, and made frequent comparisons between the objects of his present and former passion; and ever very ingeniously found out some excuse why he should not adhere to the vow he had made of never having any thing to do with the sex. There were also many reasons why he supposed he should be more happy with Miss Wakefield than the lady who had jilted him. Her good sense, and her amiable qualities prevented his having any suspicion of her treating him so basely. The consequence was, that he found himself more in love than ever.

That he might have an opportunity of more narrowly inspecting her character and conduct, he contrived to delay this business that he was to be a party in. He communicated his intentions to Mr. Chalmers, who knew very well that it was quite immaterial, whether it was finished now or six months hence;

hence ; and that the only bad consequence, if she thought it so, would be, detaining her a little longer in the country : and he was willing to assist Leeson in this affair, as he conceived him to be a very good match for his fair client : He therefore gave him a general invitation to his house ; telling him, at the same time, that though they might deceive the young Lady a little, it would be impossible to impose upon Mr. Wroughton ; and therefore he should communicate his sentiments to him. Leeson replied, he had resolved upon doing so ; and for that purpose intended to ask him and the whole party over to his house, as soon as ever his gardens were put somewhat in order, and matters a little settled within doors : for a bachelor's house is seldom remarkable for its regularity ; and after dinner to break the matter to him. Chalmers approved the scheme, and promised to stand his friend. In a few days it was put in execution ; and he had the satisfaction of hearing the situation and place praised by the Lady whom he wished to make mistress of it. Every thing was liked, every thing was agreeable ; the dinner was good and plentiful ; and many jokes were circulated during the time of the repast, on a single state. A fresh bottle was produced, as the Ladies retired to take their evening's walk.

“ This is really a very pretty place you have about you here, Mr. Leeson,” said Mr. Wroughton ; and wants nothing but a wife to make it complete.

“ I never found how much I wanted one till this moment, Sir.”

“ I am sure you may have enough of them that would be glad to pitch their tents here.”

“ Yes, Sir ; but I expect happiness when I marry, and every one will not please me.”

“ Mr. Leeson has been disappointed once already,” said Chalmers ; “ which will make him difficult in his choice, I imagine : but let me tell

“ you,

you, Mr. Wroughton, he would be a good match for a woman with a middling fortune."

"When I marry," said Leeson, "I shall have no regard to pecuniary motives."

"They do not always produce happiness," replied Wroughton.

"Far from it," returned he: "that must arise from a mutual inclination; and it is in your power to increase my happiness very much, Mr. Wroughton."

"In mine, Sir! How, pray?"

"By not discouraging my addresses to Miss Wakefield; or, if you should find me worthy, by speaking in my behalf. I have now seven hundred pounds a year clear estate; in about two years more it will be worth nine. I have conceived a very sincere and honourable passion for Miss Wakefield, and will make her any settlement that you, as her friend, can propose. I have not presumed to open my heart to her, fearing lest it might be disagreeable to her, or that she was engaged, till I had first spoken to you."

"Sir," replied Mr. Wroughton, "I cannot pretend to answer for the young Lady's inclinations, nor can I positively say that she is disengaged; though I believe she is. I think you may do very well together; for she has been also disappointed in love; and you must comfort one another: that is all I know."

He then opened all he knew, of Miss Wakefield's engagement to Mr. Kingsley, to Leeson; informed him of his death; and gave him a character of the late Doctor and his daughter, which afforded infinite pleasure to the lover, who began to conceive some hopes of success. He informed him of the design of protracting matters; and the old gentleman came into the scheme very readily.

"As

THE HISTORY OF

“ As for my part,” said he, “ I have outlived
 “ most of my dearest connexions ; but that is no
 “ reason why I should not be assiduous in promot-
 “ ing the happiness of others. I will stay with all
 “ my heart ; but I would have you cautious how
 “ you address Miss Wakefield : for your great-
 “ est difficulty will be, to overcome her hopeless
 “ prepossession in favour of her dead lover. That
 “ once done, you have many things in your favour :
 “ her condition is a very lonely one since her father’s
 “ death ; and I know she is conscious of being very
 “ unequal to the management of her own af-
 “ fairs.”

“ I assure you, Sir,” replied Mr. Leeson, “ I have
 “ formed the highest opinion of her, from the small
 “ acquaintance I have with her ; and should be ve-
 “ ry happy to obtain her favour and affection, in
 “ return for mine.”

As Mr. Leeson’s house was some distance from
 Bury, it was agreed upon to remain there all night.
 Leeson rendered himself extremely agreeable and
 entertaining ; and he found every loose that Miss
 Wakefield gave to her conversation but discovered
 fresh charms. Mr. Leeson was always at Chalmers’s
 house ; and Mr. Wroughton saw and approved him
 as worthy of Miss Wakefield’s hand. The many
 assidues and particular attention of Mr. Leeson to
 her did not escape her notice ; but she attributed
 them to a wrong cause, and imputed them to his po-
 liteness : for Mrs. Chalmers, who knew that Leeson
 had been formerly disappointed in his affection for
 a young Lady, had informed Miss Wakefield of it ;
 and she, who had lost her lover too, felt more sen-
 sibly the distresses of his situation. She had the great-
 est compassion for him ; and the similarity of their
 conditions made her peculiarly complacent. From
 what source this unexpected behaviour arose he
 knew

knew not : it was a secret to him ; but he enjoyed the sweets of it. It inspired him with hope ; and every day he became more agreeable to her. They were frequently left alone. The losses they had mutually sustained were at first hinted at, they at last were the subject of their conversations. Leeson pitied the Lady, who had lost the amiable lover in Mr. Kingsley ; and she condoled with him, for the infidelity of a mistress. These topics were pleasing at first sight, and soothed her melancholy : they became habitual at last ; and when he happened to stay away longer than ordinary, she seemed at a loss. Two months had nearly elapsed since their arrival at Bury. Chalmers and Wroughton beheld, with great satisfaction, the progress he had made in her heart. But it was time to return home now ; and matters might be brought to an explanation by that step also. Mr. Wroughton had joined in deceiving Miss Wakefield into so long a stay, by telling her the business they came about could not possibly be concluded as soon as she expected. She proposed going to London : Wroughton accompanied her, and Mr. Leeson declaring he had a call there, would go along with them if they would permit him. They readily consented, to London they went, and Miss Wakefield retired to a distant relation's of her's who had a house there.

Mr. Leeson was still more agreeable to both Miss Wakefield and Mr. Wroughton, and soon after her arrival in London, the old gentleman began to joke her about him : this opened her eyes at once, and the mist vanished : this confounded her : well as she liked, and much as she esteemed, Mr. Leeson, she had, as she thought, in her own breast insuperable objections to matrimony. The remembrance of what had passed rose in her mind, and she could not bear the thought of acting so base and deceitful a part
by

by a man who loved her. To discover the whole transaction would have been death ; and the probability of a discovery after marriage would be worse if possible : to avoid falling into this misfortune was to shun wedlock ; and that she resolved to do. When Mr. Leeson came next he perceived a remarkable alteration in her behaviour to him : this shocked him prodigiously ; he sought out his old friend, and communicated to him the change he had observed in her, and wanted to be informed of the cause. Mr. Wroughton assured him, and with great truth, that he could not account for it. " perhaps it may be," said he, " from your reserve and diffidence in opening your mind. Go and speak to her."

" I cannot, and especially while she treats me so coldly ; but I will write to her."

Miss Wakefield was not much surprized after what had passed, when she received a tender avowal of his passion, and a formal proposal from him. Her reply spoke her a woman of sense and delicacy ; but it was not a favourable one. Wroughton calmed his transports, for he happened to be with him when he received it : he gave him hopes, and told him that by perseverance only he would gain his point. Those difficulties and objections that arose in Miss Wakefield's bosom, rendered his utmost assiduities ineffectual for a whole month, notwithstanding the friendly aid of Mr. Wroughton, and the advice of her faithful confidante Mrs. Rigby, whom she consulted upon this interesting subject. The widow in the course of her letters perceived something like inclination in her fair friend to Mr. Leeson. She had nothing but unimproved good sense to combat her objections with, and she recommended it strongly to her to accept the protection of a husband.

Mr. Wroughton's affairs rendered it necessary for him to return home, but Mr. Leeson remained in town

own on Miss Wakefield's account solely ; and though his visits were painful, under her earnest injunctions of silence on the favourite subject of his heart, yet he continued them. But the anxiety of mind, with which he passed through another month in his way, produced very visible effects on his health. His spirits sunk, his appetite was lost, and sleep forsook him. In this state Miss Wakefield one evening informed him of her intention to leave London very soon, and retire from the world. This struck him, and he resolved to venture on a revival of his passion. He addressed her in the most tender and affecting manner : he threw himself at her feet : she interrupted him in his speech with some degree of impatience, declaring her resolution to hear no more. His agitations almost overcame him. She perceived the alteration in his countenance, and saw his whole frame shaken by the violence of his passion, hopeless, and unrequited. He respectfully retired, leaving her in distress almost equal to his own : but her's arose from compassion ; his from despair. He went home, and knew not what to do : he rushed up stairs to his own chamber, and walked with hasty steps to and fro almost frantic, and talking aloud to himself. At last he snatched one of the pistols that hung by the side of the chimney, and clapping it to his head, snapped it ; it missed fire, for his man had taken the priming away.

While he stood looking at the pistol which he had dashed against the floor in a paroxysm of rage and disappointment, he was surprized to see his old servant William run out of the closet which was in his room, and throw himself on his knees before him. William had taken a fancy to Mrs. Bridget, a clean likely girl, who lived as an upper servant in the house where his master lodged : he had told her his artless tale ; and Mrs. Bridget did not seem averse. At the instant that Mr. Leeson returned in that distraction,

traction, which, but for the interposition of providence, might have produced the most dismal consequences, William was entertaining Bridget in his master's apartment ; they heard his foot upon the stairs, and his voice ; but his approach was so hasty, that they had no time to escape his notice. They therefore ran into the closet ; and William, who had lived with Mr. Leeson many years, and was much esteemed by him, heard him talking aloud, and through a chink saw his actions ; but he could not get out of the closet soon enough to prevent the application of the pistol to his head ; the next instant he was kneeling before him, frightened and speechless with terror.

“ Villain, exclaimed the frantic Leeson, “ why art thou here ? ”

“ Oh, Sir, forgive me ; and do not seek to take away your precious life.”

Bridget hearing this, gave a loud shriek ; and rushing out of the closet, pushed by the astonished Leeson, and ran down stairs as fast as she could.

“ What is the meaning of all this ? ”

William explained the matter to him, and intreated him earnestly to forgive him ; and begged, with tears in his eyes, that he would lay aside all designs against himself.

The faithful William prevailed at last ; and his master sunk down in an arm-chair that stood near him, overwhelmed with a profound melancholy. William took care to remove every offensive weapon from his reach ; and did not leave him much by himself, till he found him more calm and tranquil. Mr. Leeson remained for an hour almost insensible : his brain was confused, and he could determine upon nothing. At last he resolved to write to his cruel mistress, and take a farewell of her ; then return to the country, and there linger out the remainder of

an hateful life. He called for pen and ink, and produced, after many trials, the following letter.

“ To Miss WAKEFIELD.

“ Madam,

“ Convinced by fatal experience, that your ob-
“ jections, either to me or the marriage-state, are
“ insuperable, I intend to trouble you no more with
“ my addresses, which have been so hateful to you.
“ Tomorrow I retire to the country ; and, though I
“ cannot have the happiness of spending my life with
“ you, yet your remembrance shall occupy the rema-
“ inder of it. The duration of it will not be long. — I
“ shall fall the sacrifice to a pure and honourable
“ passion, which I can never forget, or banish from
“ my heart. I am doomed to be miserable ! — Thus
“ twice deprived of my dearest hopes, I can never
“ expect to be happy. But I will do you the jus-
“ tice to say, that you never encouraged the pas-
“ sion you had no intention to reward. Wretched
“ as I am in not being able to render myself agree-
“ able to you, I can only complain of your cold-
“ ness. You have acted honourably, would I
“ could say kindly, by me. I meant this as a far-
“ well letter, but I find I have run into lamenta-
“ tions. — Is it not natural to grieve for the loss of
“ every thing that is dear to me ? I will not expos-
“ tulate, charming Maria — You have already told
“ me I cannot expect to win your favour. I go from
“ your sight, but misery attends me. I fly from
“ your presence, yet your lovely idea will accom-
“ pany me in the most dreary solitudes. I will re-
“ ty to the country, and in retirement conceal my
“ broken

“ broked heart and distracted brain. While I have
 “ the use of my reason, let me employ it in wishing
 “ you all imaginable felicity, and that your last
 “ hours may possess that peace and comfort of
 “ which I am deprived. Be not offended then when
 “ I assure you that I am, and ever shall be,

“ Your sincere and affectionate

“ though unhappy admirer,

“ A. LEESON.”

When he had finished this letter, he dispatched William with it, charging him, at the same time, not to mention the least syllable of what had passed, on his peril. However, William thought that was a ridiculous delicacy; and if he could put his affairs upon a better footing by telling it, that he should do him a signal service, and deserve praise. Molly Jansen, Mrs. Rigby's sister, lived at that time with Miss Wakefield; and when William gave her his master's letter, he dropped some hints, and shook his head so significantly, that the curiosity of Molly was raised very high. A little invitation was sufficient to make him comply with her requests. The cautious Molly took him into a private back room, and renewed her entreaty to be informed of what he meant.

The affairs of the masters and mistresses are generally known to the servants, especially if they are in love. Molly and William were not unacquainted with the present situation of things. William, in his relation, exaggerated his master's love and his despair. The terrified Molly did not hear the horrid tale without trembling; and they both concluded, that for a gentleman, with a good estate, to murder himself, was not only sinful, but shameful; and that if they could, by any means, prevent the commission of such a crime,
 it

it would be very meritorious. They directly entered into council; and, upon mature deliberation, it was agreed, that Molly should tell her mistress that night, as she was undressing her, of the whole affair; and then, if she did not upon that give some hopes to the poor gentleman, that he would certainly die. —

“And if he does,” added Molly, “I will quit her directly, for I am sure his ghost will haunt her.”

When Miss Wakefield retired to her chamber, and had summoned Molly to attend her, she did not forget her errand. The letter was introduced, and ushered in with all the most dreadful additions that an head, fertile as Molly's was, could invent. She heard the story with great uneasiness, and the latter did not contribute to calm it. She did not love Mr. Leeson with the same warmth of affection that Mr. Kingsley had inspired her with: yet she esteemed him. She made no answer to the impatient Molly, who wanted sadly to know what her intentions were, as she had promised to communicate them to William the next morning, who was to be with her very early, to be informed of the result of their happy contrivance. It was a sad mortification to her when he came, agreeably to his appointment, to have no news to tell him. However, she informed him of what she had done, and enlarged on her own good services, and dwelt upon her sagacity and cleverness in relating the affair.

During this conversation her mistress's bell rang, and she left William abruptly, telling him that she should certainly return with some intelligence. Miss Wakefield had passed a restless night. She had consulted her pillow, and weighed every argument for and against her change of situation with great deliberation. Mrs. Rigby's advice coinciding with her own inclination, turned the scale; and she resolved to see Mr. Leeson. But, as there was very little probability that a discovery of what had happened should ever come to light, she determined to preserve her own

secret. Molly attended the summons of her mistress, who asked her what hour it was; and being informed, told her to send her compliments to Mr. Leeson, and that she should be glad to see him as soon as he conveniently could spare time to call on her. Molly ran down with this message, and William lost no time in conveying it to his master. Surprized at the command, he obeyed it immediately; and, as soon as ever he was dressed, went to her. He found her in expectation of him.—“I have obeyed your summons, Madam,” said he. “I did not intend to have seen you again, or renewed my hopeless passion, before I bade a final adieu to London, and society in general.—But your desire to speak to me, though it adds to my torment, must be complied with.”

She spoke not, but her tears fell plentifully from her eyes. Her distress affected him—He threw himself at her feet, and bedewed her fair hands, with some drops, that her appearance of distress, and his own confusion, had brought into his eyes. “Rise, Sir,” said she; “rise, I beseech you.—I know not but that you have much more reason to despise me, than retain so steadfast an attachment as I am convinced you do. I must take shame to myself—I should have entirely discouraged your expectations at first, or not have attempted to destroy them so hastily now. I want no proofs of your sincerity, Sir; and hope you have a better opinion of me and yourself, than to suppose I could wish for those which I find you had well-nigh fatally produced.”

“Infamous villain!” exclaimed he, starting up.—“I charged him to be silent as death on that head, and he has betrayed me—I will punish him for it; but let me not suffer in your esteem, Miss Wakefield, on this account; do not suspect me of any mean artifice; my soul is above it. Though the frenzy attending a slighted and hopeless passion,

“ on, as violent as mine, might have urged me to
 “ make such an attempt, yet let me assure you
 “ most solemnly, that it is the only part of the con-
 “ duct of my life that I am ashamed of your know-
 “ ing. But as I have, by this means obtained the
 “ opportunity of pouring out my heart before you,
 “ let me once more assure you that my life and
 “ happiness are entirely in your hands. Though
 “ prudent and religious considerations may secure
 “ me from any future rashness, yet no prudence can
 “ secure or prevent me from a more tedious and gra-
 “ dual destruction. If I am yet disgusting to your
 “ sight——”

“ Have I ever expressed any thing like disgust,
 “ Mr. Leeson? You wrong me much——Strong
 “ though my objections were, not to you, but the
 “ marriage-state in general.”

It is almost impossible, and will but little delight
 the reader to know the whole of this conversation :
 let it suffice to say, that she suffered all her objecti-
 ons of every nature to be removed, and at length
 consented to become Mrs. Leeson. He was exces-
 sively happy in the tender and delicate assurances
 which Miss Wakefield gave him, of possessing as
 much affection for him as an heart, once engaged,
 could possibly admit. He had no fear of a deceased
 rival, nor an inclination to dispute the place which
 that rival held in her heart, which he thought, at
 that instant he could, with much propriety, call
 his own.

As there were no impediments in the way to pre-
 vent their union, they talked of it as near approach-
 ing, and Leeson was for naming the day : but the
 lady declared she had business which would detain
 her for a month in Oxfordshire, and which could
 not possibly be postponed or neglected. At the ex-
 piration of that time she promised to meet him in

London. This was the result of three or four days debate. Though a month was an age to the lover, yet was he obliged to comply. He declared his intention of going into Suffolk, to put his house in order, and prepare matters for her reception, against the happy moment in which she honoured him with her hand. On the same day they both left town: he turned his face towards Suffolk and she went down to Farmer Wilkins's. The reader has been already informed that she then settled two hundred pounds a year on Rigby. In due time she returned to London, and gave her hands to Mr. Leeson, who received it with transport. They had lived together near twenty years with the greatest harmony. Mrs. Leeson's good sense and exemplary conduct made her the object of her husband's adoration. They were the happy parents of two boys and three girls, of whom Maria was the eldest. No cross or untoward accident had happened during that time, to disturb their peace; and Mrs. Leeson had plumed herself on her security, and applauded her own prudence, in keeping this affair thus secret; when one day going to her daughter's drawers, she saw a box in one of them which she opened by chance, having escaped her notice before then. She lifted the cover, and saw a letter directed to her daughter. As a mother, she thought herself authorized to look at it. The fervency of the expression convinced her it must be from somebody in the character of a lover. She read it through; but when she came to the name at the bottom, what tongue, what pen can describe her emotions! All the blood in her body rushed up into her face; all the transactions of the time past came fresh into her memory; and she had nearly expired at the thought. This was the letter in which Rigby informed Maria of his return to Cambridge, and claimed the performance of her promise to meet him
at

at Mrs. Hillaston's. There were some ambiguous expressions in it, which alarmed the wretched mother beyond imagination: nothing could equal her terror. She was ready to sink under the apprehension of an evil, which, so far as it had the least shadow of probability, was sufficiently dreadful to pierce her heart with inconsolable anguish. Mr. Leeson was happily engaged in some business, which would detain him from home for three or four days. She ordered a carriage, and drove directly to Mrs. Hillaston's.—The reader has already seen the consequences of her arrival.

To that hour did the weeping matron deduce the history of her life to her two children. Attentive, silent, melted with affection and tenderness, did they sit at her side, and the woes of their much-honoured parent sunk deep in their imaginations. It is in the hour of distress that the voice of reason is heard: in the season of affliction the lessons of virtue penetrate our hearts, and are most attended to. Mrs. Leeson availed herself of the moment, to shew, in her own melancholy example, what her children should avoid in their future lives. “Thus, my children,” said she, “I have opened my whole heart to you; I have made you the confidants of all my affairs, and of a secret that has been, to the rest of the world impenetrable. How much do I accuse myself at this moment for having concealed my marriage with Mr. Kingsley from Mr. Leeson! Should it come to his knowledge, how he would accuse me, and justly, of falsehood! I should lose his good opinion, and infamy and disgrace would attend me. Nothing can equal the conscious confidence of truth. Supported by it, you are in no danger; but, on a dissingenuous equivocation, the most dangerous consequences attend. With what face can I say that

“ I have a son, and by a former husband, whom he
 “ has hitherto been ignorant of ? Will he believe
 “ me ? And will not my fame be ruined ? Has it
 “ not already filled me with horror ? And ever-
 “ lasting misery had been my portion, if the good-
 “ ness of Providence had not interposed, and thrown
 “ that letter in my way, by the knowledge of
 “ which I have been able to prevent the worst of
 “ crimes.”

Rigby shuddered as she spoke : his knees smote each
 other : his teeth chattered in his head. Hillaston in
 his expiring moments, in all the agony and excess of
 despair, was present to his imagination, and his
 blood chilled in his veins : he spoke not. Mrs. Lee-
 son continued her discourse.

“ These woes I have brought on myself, Maria,
 “ by not consulting my father. I married without
 “ his knowledge. My affection for Mr. Kingsley
 “ prevailed over my prudence ; and the consequence
 “ is, that I am wretched. Let this be a warning
 “ to you, my son, not to tempt the woman whom
 “ you love to swerve from the duty which she owes
 “ at once to her parents and herself. The deeds of
 “ honesty want not concealment, and honourable
 “ actions require not to be hidden. Let your feet,
 “ Oh my children, tread the paths of truth, and
 “ be bold and resolute in the cause of virtue.”

As she ceased, she hid her face, to conceal the
 tears that ran down her cheeks. A silence ensued.
 Rigby was lost in thought : he appeared almost stu-
 pified. Maria fell at her mother's feet.

“ Let it not grieve you, my dearest, my beloved
 “ mother, to have acquainted us with the history
 “ of your life. With me it shall remain an impe-
 “ netrable secret till the end of time : and let me
 “ beseech you not to distress yourself with any ap-
 “ prehensions : for no tongue will dare to call your
 “ character

“ character in question, which has been so long
“ established on the foundation of virtue and ho-
“ nour. Surely the punishment you have suffered
“ on my account is sufficient to expiate your faults,
“ which you too severely accuse yourself with : But
“ you have treated me with too great indulgence.
“ I confess I merit your reproof, and have deserved
“ your anger. Had I informed you of Mr. Rigby’s
“ paying his addresses to me, you had escaped this
“ dreadful, this severe trial. Let me bear a part
“ of the woes I have occasioned you.

“ My much loved Maria, let us not add self-acu-
“ sation to increase our afflictions. If we have erred
“ now, let us be more careful for the future : Let
“ us hope that penitence will atone for our faults,
“ and be thankful that nothing worse has happened.
“ As for you, my unhappy son, the image of him
“ who first possessed my heart, on your account I
“ have much to accuse myself. A false and mistaken
“ shame determined me to abandon you. I lost all
“ those feelings which a mother should have possess-
“ ed. Oh my son ! I deserve your reproach, your
“ curses.”

“ Not so,” said he, with a countenance expressive
of the greatest emotion. “ On the contrary, it
“ shall be my hourly employment, to supplicate the
“ God of nature to crown your days with peace
“ and happiness, to give comfort to your afflicted
“ spirit, and beseech him to make you forget me
“ utterly, if the remembrance causes you uneasiness.
“ Let the virtuous family that look up to you every
“ hour, to seek a blessing in your smiles, virtuous
“ by your good, your bright example, supply my
“ place in your heart ! Let me be forgotten, so
“ that you can enjoy tranquillity ! But no thought
“ of reproaching you shall ever pollute my soul :
“ instead of that, let me bless you, my mother.”

“ This is more than I can support,” said she, sobbing aloud. This unexampled, unmerited tenderness, from a child whom I have so long and entirely neglected, overcomes me : it is anguish intolerable. Oh Kingsley ! thou livest again in thy child : he possesses not only thy exterior form, but the virtues of thy heart ! But I must tear myself from thee : I must go where my duty and my affection call me.”

“ O do not fly thus hastily from me,” said he, smiting his breast. “ From the story of thy unhappy days, I can learn that I am no more to call you mother. I have much to say to you, much to ask of you. Can I exist, thus deprived of all my comforts at once ? In the affection of Maria, before the mystery of her being my sister was revealed, I had treasured my happiness. To find a mother gave me joy, but thus to lose her for ever is distraction. My vitals are torn away : my heart is pierced with inexpressible woe.”

“ Let the exigency of my affairs, and my situation at this instant full of danger, plead my excuse in your bosom. Heaven be my witness, that at this moment, my heart throbs with transport at the sight of you, and feels all the affection of a mother. I should think myself honoured in having such a son to boast of openly : but I am convinced you would not wish to detain me, when a discovery so fatal to my future peace and happiness might ensue.”

“ I will not detain you a moment longer. On me may all the load of this dreadful separation fall. Maria, receive the kiss of a brother. So pure was my affection for you, that the transition is very easy from the fondness of a lover to the regard of a brother. But where shall I meet thy like again to bless my future days ! May that happiness, which
“ I have

“ I have lost, ever attend you !—And you, my mother, farewell ! This separation is worse than death ; the grave would hide you from my sight, and my reason would tell me there was no possibility of recalling you to life : but to have you thus living, and debarred from receiving the tokens of my duty and affection, is a continual and perpetual torment to me. Farewell, much honoured parent ! ”

He embraced his mother and sister ; their tears choked their utterance, and they retired without saying a word. Their carriage was waiting at the door, and they drove off without delay.

Rigby remained buried in thought and overwhelmed with sorrow, even after the chaise was gone : he found they had only taken a leave *en passant* of the Hillaston's family, and therefore imagined they would look to him for an explanation of this scene. What should he do ? What should he say ? Sufficient were his own feelings to distress and afflict him, nor could he bear the thought of involving his friends in his troubles. How to act, disturbed him greatly ; and the bell rang for dinner before he could determine in what manner to demean him, or recompose his agitated spirits. Little was said during the time of the repast : and when it was over, he gave them to understand that a discovery had been made by Mrs. Leeson that concerned him much ; that it was imparted to him under the most binding promises of keeping it secret for a time, when that was elapsed he would impart it to them. They seemed satisfied : and the old lady, seeing him dejected, used every argument in her power to console him. In vain did she try : every object that appeared to him, but served to remind him of his loss, and bring afresh into his memory the cause of his grief. If he walked in the garden his Maria's image met his

eyes ; he saw her beauteous form, he beheld it with transport. A moment's recollection banished the illusion, and he trembled with horror at the thought that occupied his heated imagination. When within doors in the parlour, where the harpsichord was placed, he fancied he heard his Maria's voice : the sweet sounds yet tingled in his ears, and penetrated to his soul : but when he found himself in a dream, the hold his sister had gotten of his heart, gave him the greatest torments. He would persuade Miss Hillaston to sit down, and oblige him with a song : the plaintive sounds but added to his pain, yet they softened it, and as she sang the big tear would trickle down his cheek unperceived by him. His melancholy increased every hour, and dangerous might be the consequence if it was suffered to grow on him. Frequently did he compare his situation with Hillaston's. " Mine," would he say, " was the crime of chance : accident produced a passion, that had it been indulged, would have filled my heart with indelible woe. Thanks, fervent thanks, do I return to heaven, that it was discovered so early. I trust, I retain no other affection for her now than a brother should for a sister : it is true, I cannot on a sudden banish from my remembrance those tender ideas that I suffered to take root in my heart, and whose growth I cherished and promoted : or can it be sinful to wish, that I may meet such another charming and accomplished girl to bless my future life ? yet I am not entirely guiltless. Have I not armed my hand against a fellow-creature's life, only to insure the passion of my sister to myself ? Perhaps at this moment he languishes under the wound which my rashness and cruelty gave him. In this circumstance I am more wretched than my unhappy friend, whose fatal

passion

“passion began in his early days; it incorporated
 “with his blood, and could only be extinguished
 “by his death. He felt the victim of it, after a
 “long and successful combat. My supplications
 “shall hourly ascend to heaven to shield me from
 “despair like his, to endue me with fortitude to
 “support the woes which I may be afflicted with,
 “that I may be withheld from the commission of
 “so rash and terrible an action as his: nor boldly
 “and presumptuously of my own will, rush into
 “the presence of my creator and demand of him,
 “Why I was rendered miserable? Submission to his
 “will shall influence my conduct.”

Thus did the unhappy youth spend his hours in
 self-accusation, and at the same time endeavoured
 to fortify his heart with the lessons of resignation
 and patience; but they were ineffectual to oppose
 the torrent of woes that overwhelmed him. He deter-
 mined to quit Mrs. Hillaston's: she and her daugh-
 ter had strove to dissipate the grief which they saw
 preyed upon him continually. In them he found the
 care and tenderness of a mother and sister: but his
 heart was too deeply wounded to be easily cured.
 They did not oppose his departure, but made him
 promise to return to them again soon.

“I repeat it to you,” said the old lady, “that
 “you are respected here as my child and her
 “brother; come and comfort us sometimes, and
 “receive consolation from us yourself.”

He thanked them in the most affectionate terms,
 and assured them of his regard, promising never to
 forget their kindness.

When he returned to Cambridge, he could not look
 at those places, where he had seen and conversed
 with his unhappy friend, without regret. These
 were eternal remembrances of his situation, could he
 ever have been inclined to forget it. In a short
 time

time he set out for Berkshire, where he arrived without any accident.

So severe were the woes he had experienced in the small space that he had been absent from the family, and so much had they affected him, that the good farmer and his wife expressed great concern at the alteration that appeared in him. Their assiduities could not dissipate his melancholy, or restore him to his former chearful behaviour. As he seemed to court solitude, they indulged him. Hillaston used to be the companion of Rigby : his name had not been mentioned since the latter's arrival in the country. Hannah took an opportunity, when they were alone together, to ask Rigby where Mr. Hillaston was. He started at the name, looked wistfully at her, then uttered a deep sigh. This alarmed her very much, and she could not forbear repeating her question, with a kind of anxiety in her countenance.—

“ Alas !” replied Rigby, “ he is no more.”

The poor girl turned away, and burst into tears. He was surprised at the sight.

“ What can affect you so much, my dear Hannah, in the account of his death, as to cause these tears ?”

“ Ought not I to lament the death of a man who proved himself so good a friend to me ?”

He permitted this concern in her to be screened under the name of friendship ; but his heart seemed to give it a tenderer title : He judged from his own feelings.

Wilkins could not behold Rigby's dejection without uneasiness. On the fourth day after his arrival, when they were by themselves, he addressed him :

“ I assure you, my dear Mr. Rigby, I cannot bear to see you so low-spirited and melancholy. I have ever looked upon you as my son, and have nearly as great an affection for you. Inform me then, what it is that has caused this alteration in you ;

— and

“ and what affects you thus. Is it my refusal to satisfy your curiosity ?”

“ Oh, would to God you had : then I should not have been the wretch I am now !”

“ What is the matter ?” said the affrighted old man.

“ Know, that I have seen my mother ; and by that means only was prevented from marrying my sister : these are the consequences of your silence.”

“ Oh heaven !” said he, lifting up his eyes, and clapping his hands together, in an agony of terror, “ What horror ! Oh that I had broke through all obligations to have informed you of the truth of the matter ! What numberless evils does one falsehood occasion ! Let me intreat you to forgive me, my dear child : but I had been bound in so solemn a manner to conceal this circumstance, that it would have been a crime that I never could have forgiven myself, had I broke my promise.”

Rigby assured him that he forgave him ; and at the same time applauded his fidelity and resolution in keeping it secret. He then opened and related the whole affair to him. The good old man underwent many agitations during the narrative, and wept very plentifully.

“ I wonder not,” said Rigby, “ at your emotions : the thought of the horrid crime I was so near committing, is enough to terrify any body. My reason and the goodness of God have contributed to my cure ; but I cannot avoid lamenting the loss of so amiable a girl as Maria : from thence my melancholy proceeds, and that alteration in me which I have now acquainted you with the cause of.”

Wilkins endeavoured to console him, by bidding him look out for somebody else to supply Maria's place

place in his heart. The other told him, that time alone could work the cure ; but at present he could not think of any such thing.

When he found himself a little more composed, he rode over to Mr. Wilcox's. He was absent from home ; but his wife received her friend with pleasure : yet it was much damped, by the great change she saw in him. After the most affectionate enquiries about his health, which she seemed to fear was but bad, and to which he returned equivocal answers, he asked after her husband and cousin.

“ Indeed,” said she, “ Lydia is in a very poor way : she seems to be in a decline. No remedy can be found for her disorder : a total want of spirits, an irremovable melancholy, a carelessness of herself and every thing about her : she affects solitude, and she often bursts into tears without any visible cause. Her physicians have advised a change of air and situation for her ; which there is no possibility of inducing her to comply with. She goes no where but to her own house ; and that seems only to increase her dejection : for I observe she is always worse when she returns. You and she are only fit company for each other : for you look much alike.”

She had scarce uttered these words, when Miss Bennet came into the room. If she was surprized to see Rigby, he was not less affected at the sight of her. Her face was pale and wan ; her whole frame was emaciated ; her eyes, whose lustre was a little dimmed, still retained their sweetness and benignity ; her countenance retained its sensibility : and this great alteration in her, only seemed to have increased the delicacy of her shape and face. But the languor and dejection that appeared so visible in both, alarmed the heart of the compassionate, the humane Rigby. Every tender sensation in his composition

position arose in her behalf : they spoke in his eyes ; they were visible in his countenance. As the refracted rays of the sun, just sunk below the horizon, tinged the drooping head of the fair lily, bent by heavy showers, with a faint red : so weak, so faint was the blush that overspread the pallid cheek of the languid Lydia, when Rigby rose at her entrance. Her almost exhausted spirits were set in motion by the sight of him ; and gentle as that was, yet it was almost too powerful for her to support. She found it necessary to repose herself in a chair that was near her : and Mrs. Wilcox offered her some drops to revive her, before she could answer Rigby's enquiries after her health. She made some slight complaints of indisposition ; and remarked, at the same, that she was afraid he had some reason to complain likewise, if she could judge from the alteration she perceived in him, of a bad state of health. He replied, he had been ill, but was then much better. The conversation took a general turn ; and Miss Bennet bore her share in it as well as her weakness would permit her. It was far from sprightly ; but it was sentimental and refined, Mrs. Wilcox perceived that Lydia was much pleased at finding Rigby there ; and that she exerted herself very much. She thought she saw a softness and expressive compassion in Rigby's eyes, in his voice, in his manner, that indicated the feelings of his heart. She judged that his malady arose not from the illness of the body, but the mind. The more she observed him the greater reason she had to maintain that opinion.

“ If that is the case,” said she to herself, “ my amiable cousin may perhaps cure him,”

He was pressed to stay to dinner : he complied, and spent the evening with the two ladies. When he took his leave, Mrs. Wilcox intreated him to call on them soon again ; and indeed appointed the next

next day but one. He promised to attend them, and departed. He found himself very happy from that day's employment.

"Poor young Lady!" said he to himself; "her father's death has much affected her. She is most deserving of pity. How much is she altered! yet she still retains a great share of beauty. But it is like that which we imagine spirits possess: for there appears nothing corporeal about her. Sure, if my attempts to console or amuse her, will be attended with any success, I will readily devote my time and service to her."

Softened with his own distress, though at all times the child of compassion, yet at that moment was Rigby more sensible of affliction, and the danger of her situation, than he would have been at any other time. He was not ignorant of the prepossession she had in favour of him; but he determined never to let the least hint of his being acquainted with it escape his lips: nor did he, in reality, plume himself upon it; though she was far from being disagreeable to him, and even though he felt a degree of pain arising from the reflection on her illness; yet he loved not: his heart had not intirely shaken off its former chains; and, instead of the fierce passion it burned with before, now entertained the most tender friendship for the gentle Lydia. She could not refrain from imparting the sensations of her heart to her cousin. Pleased as she was at the sight of him whose image engrossed her ideas, yet she was uneasy at the alteration that appeared in him. From the first time that her cousin had made a discovery of her sentiments, though she often talked favourably of him, yet she ever restrained herself from revealing the great affection she had conceived for him. She could not bring herself to confess the extent of her passion: and burying it in silence in her bosom, saw her approaching dissolution without dread:

dread : for all things were tasteless and disagreeable to her, deprived of him who alone could give them a relish.

This interview roused her almost expiring spirits. Mrs. Wilcox saw the effect it had upon her, and wished to have from her own mouth what she thought of Rigby. They talked of him after his departure ; and Lydia acknowledged the pain she felt at the paleness of his looks, and the melancholy that appeared in his countenance.

“ Perhaps,” said Mrs. Wilcox, “ he has been crossed in love

“ Then he need have no greater misfortune,” said she with a sigh.

“ I have known the torments of a slighted passion, Lydia.”

“ Thy are insupportable !”

“ Yet, my dear Lydia, there are hopes.”

“ Not for me,” said she, the tear of sorrow trickling gently down her face “ I see my end approaching ; and the silent grave will hide my shame and bury my misfortunes at once.”

Mrs. Wilcox was greatly affected with this speech : it was more than ever she had said before ; and the weak state of her body rendering her less able to support the conflicts of the mind, made her an object worthy pity. The tears still continued to pace one another down Lydia’s woe-worn cheek. Mr. Wilcox could not refrain from accompanying her : but she endeavoured to comfort her, by assuring her, she had some reason to believe that Rigby was not insensible to her charms ; that she had observed his eyes almost constantly directed towards her, and that they expressed the greatest tenderness and pity. With these and other consolatory arguments did she strive to combat Lydia’s affliction till she retired to rest. The next day she continually talked of him ; and the day that he was appointed to

to visit them she rose very early, and was dressed ready to receive him, long before the hour that he was expected to come. Mrs. Wilcox smiled in secret at her uneasiness, the impatience she expressed, and rejoiced at the amendment of her spirits. He came at length; and Lydia's tell-tale eyes revealed the pleasure she felt at the sight of him whom her heart loved. Rigby had determined in his own breast, in what manner to demean himself to the fair invalid. He was all attention and tenderness; his voice was tuned to the softest accents; the most soothing words were selected to please her ear. They sunk deep in her soul, and increased her passion, at the moment they gave her the greatest delight.

While Rigby was thus affording consolation to the afflicted Lydia, it returned on himself in the greatest degree. The complacent manner in which she received his civilities, and the notice she took of them, rejoiced his heart, and gratified his humanity. He was happy in seeing that he succeeded in his attempts to amuse her grief; and his endeavours to do it made him forget his own. Mrs. Wilcox saw the effect this behaviour had upon her cousin with the greatest pleasure.

As Rigby had declared that he should stay for some time in the country, he was pressed to visit them frequently, especially as Mr. Wilcox was now so much abroad, and busied in the settlement of Miss Bennet's affairs, being made an executor to her father's will. Rigby found this invitation very agreeable, and, in a short time, really necessary to his happiness. Miss Bennet had imperceptibly slid into the place which Maria had formerly held in his heart. As the friendship he professed to have for that charming young lady increased in tenderness, he began to doubt the account which Mrs. Wilcox had given him

him of her regard for him. He could not think of asking her to verify it ; but he felt himself very uneasy about it. There is nothing more dangerous for a man of sensibility, whose heart has been once attached by tender ties, which have been broken afunder by any accident, than to fall into the bosom of an amiable woman of a tender disposition. Instead of healing the former wounds, she makes them bleed afresh ; and an heart once conquered, is easily subdued a second time. In this situation was Rigby, and truly unhappy he was ; for he could not avoid reflecting that his character would inevitably suffer in the opinion of the world, who would suppose that he attached himself to this young lady merely for the sake of her fortune, which was so much beyond his hopes or expectation. But the pleasure he felt in her company stifled these remonstrances, and he became more enamoured every day he saw her. His visits had been very frequent, and always well received. Mr. Wilcox had seen him at his house, soon after his arrival in the country, and continued to express a great regard for him. Miss Bennet was then very ill. He returned to London. In the mean time Rigby saw Lydia almost every day, and soon became very intimate with her. Mrs. Wilcox left them alone, whenever she could find an opportunity of absenting herself ; and her cousin never complained of, or perceived the want of her. Lydia recovered her spirits and her health amazingly every day : her eyes resumed their lustre, her cheeks began to revive their long-lost bloom. She could not recover her plumpness ; but she mended so fast, that her health appeared to be almost re-established. Rigby had lost the melancholy and gloom that hung over his countenance. He began to be chearful and sprightly again ; and the many marks of esteem which he daily received from Miss Bennet, helped to inspire him with joy.

Att

At this period Wilcox returned from London. Nothing could equal the surprize he expressed at the great change in Miss Bennet's health ; but he did not rejoice at it internally, though he could not help saying so in public. Her situation was really dangerous. When he left her, the physicians declared they had no hopes of her recovery, unless she would consent to a change of air. This she would not do ; nor did Wilcox use many arguments to persuade her to it ; for, had she died, which there was every probability of, he would have inherited his uncle's estate ; which, it must be confessed he had a great affection for. It was not therefore very pleasing to him to see her so much recovered in the space of six weeks or a month, when he had already enjoyed her fortune in imagination, and was very ready and willing to do it in reality. This change he very justly concluded must be caused by something which he had then no notion of, but which he determined to find out ; and should it be necessary to be removed, he saw no good reason why it ought not.

The artless and natural behaviour of the innocent Lydia soon let him into the secret ; and he found that Rigby was the physician who had effected this cure. It was more than he could well bear. To be deprived of that estate by him, and to see him going to enjoy it, was a triumph not to be tolerated. It stung him to the heart, and he could not restrain his temper in conformity to the dictates of his prudence ; but behaved so very cool and distant to Rigby that Lydia and his wife both perceived it. He would have insulted him if he had dared, but he was acquainted with his resolution ; and though he could not effect his purpose by force, yet he might by artifice. The lion is allured into the toils, and the elephant is enticed into the pit. The unsuspecting honesty

honesty of the brave man cannot descend to the machinations of the villain.

When Wilcox saw how matters stood, he went again to London. He was secure that no step could be taken to his prejudice, for Lydia was not yet of age, though she wanted but a few months of it; and he had power to prevent her marriage till then. He therefore left them to amuse themselves a little longer. Rigby was uneasy at this alteration in Wilcox's behaviour to him: he knew that he had given him no offence, and therefore could not even guess at the reason. He thought, perhaps, that he might take umbrage at the frequent visits he made to his house in his absence, and might have conceived some suspicions of his wife. It was disagreeable to him to be treated with coolness; and though, painful as it was to him to stay away from his Lydia, yet he determined to do it, at least while Mr. Wilcox remained in the country, which he did for three days.

The third day Miss Bennet very innocently expressed her surprize to Mrs. Wilcox at Mr. Rigby's absence. Wilcox overheard her.—“I think he has been here often enough lately,” said he, sneering. Lydia blushed with shame and anger.—“I have a right to see my friends here, Sir,” returned she; “and I shall never forget the obligations I am under to Mr. Rigby.”

“Nor I neither,” said he interrupting her; “they are so great and so many, that I cannot return them, and therefore do not desire to see him.”

“Then, Sir, I will remove to my own house, where I shall be at liberty to see whom I please.”

This was a step that he did not desire she should take by any means. He therefore drew in his horns, and made many apologies, declaring he only jested; that Rigby was a very worthy young man, and that he esteemed him very much. Lydia seemed pacified, and no more was said of it. No Rigby appeared that day,

day, and Miss Bennet could not conceal her uneasiness.

Early in the fourth morning Wilcox set off for London, and the ladies sent their compliments to Rigby, to know if he was well, fearing something ailed him, not having seen him so long. He learned from the servant, that Mr. Wilcox was departed; and returned his compliments, with a promise to pay his respects to them that afternoon. Miss Bennet, who was better acquainted with Wilcox's notions and temper than Rigby, and had but a poor opinion of him, from some late transactions which she had seen, but which she concealed from his wife's knowledge, whom she loved and esteemed, almost dived to the bottom of Wilcox's intentions, in wishing to debar Rigby from visiting her.

Timid as her natural disposition was, and though possessed of the greatest gentleness and complacency, yet she could not think of giving up the happiness of her life, to please the caprice or avarice of her cousin; and she determined to exert herself on this occasion, whenever she should find it necessary: but she could not, with any propriety, reveal or impart her suspicions or designs to Mrs. Wilcox; and keeping them in her own bosom, was disagreeable and distressing. These thoughts made her very melancholy, and Rigby perceived it when he came in the evening, according to promise. He excused his absence on account of some business he said he was engaged in, and concealed the real cause, on Mrs. Wilcox's account, whom he esteemed very much. But it made him truly unhappy to see Lydia relapsing into the state of melancholy and dejection from which he began to form the most sanguine hopes that she was recovering. His attention and assiduities were not wanting to remove it. She was extremely well pleased at this mark of his regard: and gratified

gratified him, by appearing more sprightly, in consequence of his endeavours to amuse her. This made him exert himself, and never did he appear more agreeable than at that moment in Lydia's eyes. The worthy Mrs. Wilcox was not less happy than either of them, for she saw with the greatest pleasure the good effects that Rigby's conversation and company had upon her cousin; and as she had a real esteem for him, she wished that they might be united together in the tenderest manner. Therefore she encouraged their passion, and gave them every opportunity of enjoying their private conversation without interruption.

Lydia told Rigby she hoped he would come and see them soon again; that as he was the only person they saw in that solitude, it would be cruel in him to stay away from them. He promised to return the next day. The spring was approaching, and the gentle Lydia was now able to walk abroad when the weather permitted. She found exercise improved her health, and frequently took short walks in the garden, on fine days, in Rigby's company, who always had the happiness of supporting her. Frequently would he retain her trembling hand in his, and often press it, without resistance, to his lips.



B O O K X.

TH E S E little gallantries were not displeasing to Lydia, and Rigby received a degree of happiness from being allowed to exercise them. The touch thrilled to his heart, which was melted with the tenderest, the softest sensations.—“Charming Miss Bennet,” said he, as he was walking alone with her one day, her fair arm entwined in his, “how happy am I to see you so much recovered, and so well able to bless me with your company!”

“Yes, thank God,” replied she with a sigh, “I am much better than I have been.”

“But,” said he, “I am afraid you are not so well as you were: I see a gloom in your countenance; you are oppressed with melancholy; I observe frequent sighs heave your bosom; I dread a return of your illness, which had nearly been so fatal to you. Forgive my thus interesting myself in your affairs, but assure yourself that nothing is more dear to me than your welfare.”

“I have no reason to doubt it, Mr. Rigby; your behaviour has convinced me that you are my friend, and I am sure I want one.”

“Small is my power, and trifling are the services that I can render to you; but, such as they are, make me happy by commanding them; depending on this, that my heart is totally devoted to you, and that it is too honest and sincere to make any professions that it means not to perform and adhere to.”

He

He stopped. Lydia hung down her head, and remained silent.—“You doubt me then, Lydia, and I am wretched. If you disbelieve my assurances of friendship, in what manner would you have treated me, had I been hardy enough to have revealed the favourite passion of my heart. I am yet master of that secret, and it shall die with me ; for sure, of all the torments that can afflict the human breast, those arising from slighted love are the most fierce and poignant.”

This was touching the tenderest string in Lydia's whole composition. This was a subject that was nearest her heart. It was a conversation she had long wished in secret to be engaged in with Rigby ; yet, so violent were her agitations at his mentioning his passion, that she could scarcely stand. Her arm trembled so that he could not avoid perceiving it. What to attribute her emotions to he knew not; but he found she was much affected. Some trees that had been lately felled lay near the road side ; to these he conducted her in silence, for he thought she wanted to sit down. She seated herself, and he placed himself close to her. Rigby was in a state of torment, at that moment, which would have induced his amiable mistress to have pitied him, had she not been otherwise well inclined to it. Rapid was the succession of disagreeable ideas in his brain. Till that moment in which he dreaded her answer, he never knew how much he loved her. The virtues of the charming maid, united with great personal beauty ; her situation, which increased her delicacy and tenderness, awakened the humanity of her lover, and had got a much firmer footing in his heart than he was aware of. His fears lest he had offended her, when he saw her thus affected, were augmented, and he knew not what to do—“I am miserable, Miss Bennet,” said he : “whether your present uneasiness arises from
“illness

THE HISTORY OF

“ illness, or, which I dread more, from your anger
“ at my rashness, in either situation I am wretched.
“ Great though my offence has been, yet I will rely
“ on your goodness for pardon; and let me be so
“ happy as to obtain it, on promising never to trans-
“ gress in like manner again.”

He paused—Still she found herself unable to speak. A variety of conflicting passions tied up her tongue. Her joy at hearing these sounds from the lips of the man she had formerly sighed for, rendered her incapable of speaking. Her mantling blood rose in her cheeks, her palpitating heart throbbed in her agitated bosom; but she could not speak—“ In what
“ manner, Miss Bennet, am I to construe this silence?
“ But while it permits me to acquaint you with
“ my love, I will bless it. Yes, adorable Lydia, I
“ love; my passion is rooted so deeply in my heart,
“ the one must be torn away before the other is
“ eradicated. I have now informed you of my pre-
“ sumptuous hopes; I tremble at the repulse they
“ deserve, and, I fear, will meet with, from you.
“ The wretched mariner views not the sky, black
“ with impending tempests, with more horror than
“ I do your brow, expecting every instant my merit-
“ ed fate. Dreadful state! When you will neither
“ permit me to be your friend nor your lover.”

The melancholy tone in which he uttered these words penetrated to her heart.—“ I assure you, Mr.
“ Rigby, I shall esteem myself honoured in your
“ friendship.”

“ And to that alone I will confine myself. At
“ humble distance will I remain, and pray for that
“ success and happiness to attend your life, which I
“ so sincerely wish you. Your friend, your assured
“ friend, I will remain; and shall deem it the honour
“ and happiness of my life to be allowed that title. But
“ though I have dared to cherish tenderer passions
“ for

“ for you, permit me to affirm to you, in the most
“ solemn manner, that it is not your fortune, or
“ rank in life, so much superior to mine, that has
“ ever influenced me. My heart is superior to all
“ such considerations. I loved you, abstracted from
“ every lucrative view. You have prescribed
“ bounds to my hopes, and I will endeavour to con-
“ fine myself within them. I will check my desires,
“ I will restrain my passions, but I cannot forget ;
“ and, whilst remembrance lives, I must be wretch-
“ ed.”

“ I never entertained an opinion of you that took
“ away from your merit, Mr. Rigby ; I ever thought
“ you worthy of my greatest esteem.”

“ I confess myself highly honoured by your ap-
“ probation of me ; yet, do not you act cruelly by
“ me ? I am yet in suspense ; a state more dreadful
“ than the most melancholy certainty. Why do
“ you, with a misplaced humanity, delay giving me
“ the answer that will put an end to my hopes ? Or
“ will you permit me to cherish them ? At one mo-
“ ment my anxious heart swells with rapture, at
“ another it is depressed with grief. Ease it, I be-
“ seech you. Tell me, lovely Lydia, tell me, is it
“ possible for you to cast an eye of favour on one so
“ much beneath you ? Am I not despicable and
“ wretched ?”

“ You judge too hardly of yourself, Sir ; merit
“ levels distinctions, and regard is ignorant of them.
“ What will you have me say to quiet your tumults ?
“ I want that ease to mine. I will acquaint you
“ with my sentiments ; reserve will be injurious, and
“ but lower me in the opinion of a man of honour.
“ Such I esteem you, Mr. Rigby ; and I will be in-
“ genuous enough to assure you, a matter I believe
“ that your penetration made you acquainted with
“ long

“ long ago, that your professions of esteem for me
“ are very agreeable.

“ No,” said he, interrupting her, “ I am not vain
“ enough for that. Though, through your com-
“ placence, I have enjoyed the honour of an inti-
“ macy with you, yet never did I imagine what I
“ wished to be true. But allow me to assure you
“ of my unalterable, my inviolable affection ; and
“ receive the tribute of an heart that is unalienably
“ yours.”

As he spoke he fell on his knees before her, and
seizing her tremulous hand, pressed it to his fervid
lips.—“ Rise, Mr. Rigby,” said she ; “ such humi-
“ liation becomes not the person whom I have made
“ this declaration to ; rise, I pray you. This may
“ bespeak your regard for me, and my vanity may
“ be flattered by it, but I cannot allow it in the
“ man I have thus distinguished.”

“ Let me ever be thus happy, thus blessed, by
“ such a favourable distinction. Let a series of ac-
“ tions, worthy your regard, more properly, more
“ effectually speak for me. In this manner only do
“ I wish to make my love known.”

“ And in that manner I wish to receive it.”

Lydia grew more confident from the assurances
of her lover’s virtuous passion ; assurances which she
longed to hear, and was infinitely pleased to know.
She was ready to believe them ; but in what manner
to inform him of her sentiments she knew not. Too
great a forwardness would have disgusted him as
much as too great a reserve might unhappily have
repressed his flame, and smothered, though not ex-
tinguished it. She saw her delicate passion reflected
in him ; and seeing, rejoiced in it. But could she at
once indulge the prepossession of her heart ? Could
she tell him that her life, her happiness, solely de-
pended on him ? It was impossible, and it would
have

have been imprudent, to have done it at once. Her future behaviour would sufficiently convince him of her regard. Hers was a nice part to play, with the tenderest passions opposing her modesty and reserve. Her prudence and discretion triumphed over love. She gave him room to hope every thing ; and restraining her own fondness, also kept his transports within due bounds.

She was now sufficiently recovered to be able to proceed on their walk, and they turned homewards. This discovery made them both happy. Rigby could talk of his passion to his charming Lydia without restraint, and she could listen to his vows without fear. Many interviews succeeded to this, before she informed him of her affection for him ; and he attained that knowledge imperceptibly, and by slow degrees. As the sun with regular and gradual steps climbs the vast expanse of heaven, dispelling the fogs and mists that obscure his rays, till he obtains meridian brightness ; so did the gentle Lydia drive away those doubts and fears from Rigby's heart, till the bright noon of virtuous love shone on the enraptured couple. Happy were your hours then, children of innocence ; blissful were your moments, sacred to virtue and to love. Content and peace walked hand in hand with you ; the roses of delight were spread in your paths, and the thorns of guilt were not to be found amongst them.

Mrs. Wilcox perceived the footing on which our lovers now were. Female modesty prevented Lydia from telling her cousin of her situation, who took an opportunity of being even with her for such unnecessary reserve ; and commending her choice of Rigby while he was present wished them every happiness together that mutual love could give them. Lydia's face was overspread with blushes, and her eyes seemed to reproach her for unkindness, in thus
talking

talking of what was nevertheless no secret. Blessed in each other, the enamoured pair sought for no foreign pleasure, when they found every thing in their own breasts that could contribute to their happiness.

While they spent their hours in joy, grief and affliction preyed on the hapless Hannah Wilkins. The passion which her shame prevented indulging in the life-time of the man she adored, now was let loose : She nourished the fatal, the hopeless flame : and she revered Hillafton's memory with as much devotion as the most zealous bigot worships the relicks of some legendary saint. Her whole soul was engrossed with his beloved idea. On the good qualities of his heart she grounded her love ; his virtues were always uppermost in her thoughts ; on them her mind ran by day, and his image returned to her dreams at night.—“ I am very unhappy, and I cannot relieve myself.” Thus would she complain in secret. “ I perceive my folly, and I know the fruitlessness of my tears ; but I cannot sufficiently lament the loss of a man who was so dear to me. I will imitate his virtues, I will follow his example. The lessons his friendship taught me I have treasured up in my memory, and never shall they be forgotten by me. Happy should I have been if he had lived ; and if he had, it is not on me he would have placed his affections. In every way I should have been miserable.”

Unavailing as her lamentations were, yet they were not hushed ; and though her tears flowed in vain, yet were they not dried up. Her father and mother perceived the great change in their daughter, and were totally at a loss to account for it. Her colour was gone, her sprightliness vanished, and melancholy and dejection assumed its place. Frequent enquiries did they make concerning her health :

health : and ever did she answer them by saying, Nothing ailed her. They grieved at her obstinate silence, which would not allow her to point out to them the means of cure. Rigby noticed the change in her, and was very sorry for it ; and was, in reality, as much at a loss to account for the cause of it, as the rest of the family. However, he imagined he could give a better guess at it than they could, who were not witnesses to the emotions she discovered at the account of Hillaston's death. He thought, by finding this matter out, it might be possible to remove the ground of Hannah's uneasiness whom, having been bred up with, he regarded as a sister. He resolved to try to unravel this mystery. — “ You are melancholy, Hannah,” said he to her one afternoon, “ come and take a walk with me.”

She consented, and he led her unsuspecting towards the wood where Hillaston had rendered her such signal service. With agreeable chat he beguiled the way, and before she could recollect herself, she found that she was at the memorable spot. Every tender passion was encreased in Hannah's breast. Rigby stopped, and looking wistfully at her, asked, “ Is not this the place where my poor friend aimed himself in defence of virtue and honour, against villainy and force ?”

“ It is,” replied the trembling Hannah, with a faltering voice.

“ Poor Hillaston ! thou wert truly worthy. I think I see thee now.”

“ Where, for heaven's sake !” exclaimed the terrified maid. “ I shall die with fear.”

“ Fear not, my dear Hannah ; I only meant his virtues were ever present to me, and my fancy represents his image as when alive. Was he not a worthy man, Hannah ?”

“ Indeed he was,” replied she, with a sigh, the silent tear trickling down her pallid cheek.

“ I assure you, Hannah, I lament him very much ;
“ and highly as I thought of him before, his gene-
“ rosity to you encreased my good opinion of
“ him.”

“ I shall never forget his goodness, Mr. Rigby.”

She sobbed as she spoke, her voice was hardly articulate. He looked attentively at her : she blushed, and turned from him.——“ Your good-nature,
“ Hannah, is truly commendable ; but tell me, my
“ dear girl, is it only for a friend you grieve in this
“ manner ? Hillaston deserved your regard, and I
“ cannot blame your affliction.”

“ By what means,” said she, “ have you thus
“ learned what I was most anxious to hide from the
“ world ? Tell me, Mr. Rigby, have I said or done
“ any thing that would lead to a discovery of my
“ sentiments ? I shall die with shame, if I have,
“ and never more be able to shew my face.”

“ No, indeed, you never did : but I have long
“ suspected this to be the cause of your unhap-
“ piness. I am your sincere friend, Hannah. My
“ heart is susceptible of pity : inform me of your
“ griefs, and receive every consolation in my power
“ to give you.

“ I will impart every thing to you : I know you
“ are good, very good, and will pity me. There
“ is nothing I should be ashamed of, for I have not
“ been guilty ; yet it is mortifying to expose my
“ weakness. But the object of my wishes is num-
“ bered with the dead, and in the grave : my tears
“ and lamentations will not reach him. I did love
“ your friend. Mr. Rigby, but he knew not of it.
“ I adore his memory now. My gratitude first
“ taught me to esteem him, and my heart was
“ brought to love him insensibly : yet be assured,
“ that never did he speak to me any thing but the
“ language of friendship. From his regard to my
“ welfare

“ welfare he gave me the best advice for the re-
“ gulation of my conduct. When he spoke to me,
“ he laid aside that fierce look and stern voice which
“ he generally had, and conveyed his instructions
“ to me with the greatest gentleness, and the most
“ winning mildness. At those moments I saw into
“ his heart : and is it a wonder if the beauty of it
“ charmed me ? Such noble sentiments I never
“ heard before. His conduct shewed that he was
“ actuated by them. Nothing flattering or seduc-
“ ing ever came out of his mouth ; and, without
“ designing it, he won my heart. How amiable
“ must he have been, had it pleased God to have
“ restored him to his senses ! But he is gone, and I
“ may tell to you the passion I entertained for him.
“ It is truly virtuous. His honour and goodness
“ charmed me ! Blame me not for lamenting him.
“ I know the folly of it, but I cannot help it. This
“ I request, as I have confided in you, do not be-
“ tray my weakness to my father and mother. I
“ would not wish to add to their grief, by giving
“ them an opportunity to imagine that I had acted
“ amiss. It is not every heart can feel the delicacy
“ of my unhappy sentiments.”

“ Be assured it shall remain an entire secret with
“ me : but reflect, Hannah, how fruitless is your
“ grief ! how unavailing your tears !—Consider”.

“ I do,” said she, weeping as she spoke ; but this
“ place revives the sense of the obligation I am un-
“ der to him. In this spot I sat, almost overpower-
“ ed, the victim of brutal force, when, like an
“ angel of light, he came to my deliverance, and
“ rescued me. So good, so honest a man, I shall
“ never know again.”

Rigby seeing her much affected, led her home-
wards, and in the way said every thing that reason
or humanity could suggest, to combat the fatal pas-

sion which she had conceived. She admitted that he was right, and promised to get rid of her melancholy if she could. He had the pleasure to find she appeared a little more composed, and began to conceive that time might effect her cure. This conversation, and the remembrance of his friend, which was strongly revived by it, threw an air of dejection into his countenance. His melancholy was visible when he entered Mrs. Wilcox's house, and it did not escape Miss Bennet's observation. Her tenderest assiduities were not wanting to remove it. They were left alone: and Miss Bennet asked him if he was well, or what had caused that alteration in him? He replied, "The thoughts of an old friend, whom he had unhappily lost."

"It is grievous to part with our friends," said she. "No one has felt the loss more severely than I have done. But Mr. Rigby, if I can recollect, when you first came down here, though I was then very ill myself, and knew not how long I should live, I thought that I perceived a gloom very unusual hang over you, and something seemed to prey upon your spirits. It is now happily removed. May I know the cause of it? Pardon a woman's curiosity; and if it ought not to be revealed, I will check my desire to hear it."

"There is nothing relating to myself, adorable Lydia, that I will not most willingly inform you of. Your suppositions are true: I was then wretched beyond description. Despair and grief had taken possession of me, and your charms only were sufficiently powerful to banish them from my soul. I will tell you the cause of my woe. it is almost forgotten in your presence, and it revives my affliction to recollect it."

"Then," said she, "interrupting him, forbear to tell it; I would not wish to give you uneasiness, and especially to gratify an idle curiosity."

"No,"

“ No,” said he, “ permit me to relate it to you ;
“ I am sure your humanity will be interested in my
“ story, and your good-nature will pity me. Be-
“ sides, it is absolutely incumbent on me to let you
“ into the history of my life, that I may not de-
“ ceive you ; for I am by no means the son of the
“ person whom you have heard to be my mother.”

“ No !” said the astonished Lydia, her curiosity
greatly excited by so mysterious a beginning,
“ Whose then ? I shall be greatly obliged to you to
“ clear up this matter to me.”

He began, in obedience to her desire, and went
through the narration of his history, concealing the
present name of his mother and her family, and
entirely suppressing Hillaston’s story. His fair au-
ditor listened with the greatest attention ; nor was
her gentle bosom unaffected at the different parts
of it. She could not refrain from tears at the de-
scription of his unhappy mother’s meeting him so
suddenly, and on such an occasion. He concluded,
his relation by telling her, that he had informed
her of every circumstance of his life, that she could
be at all concerned in the knowledge of. — “ And
“ now, Madam, though honoured with your good
“ opinion, I must own that I am unworthy of you
“ in every shape, except possessing an heart inspired
“ with the most pure and ardent passion that ever
“ filled the breast of man ; and that is no merit in
“ me, because I cannot help myself.”

“ Talk not in that manner, Mr. Rigby : it calls
“ my judgment in question ; and it shall be my pride
“ and happiness to remove every difference that
“ fortune or chance may have placed between us ;
“ hence forth think no more of it.”

“ Unparalleled goodness !” said he, taking her
by the hand. “ In what manner shall I thank you
“ for this profession of kindness ! My life will be
“ too

“ too short to shew my gratitude. Words are in-
 “ capable of expressing my sense of your condescen-
 “ sion. Then shorten the term of my probation,
 “ and let us be united in those sacred bands, dis-
 “ soluble only by death.”

As he spoke, he approached her lips, and claim-
 ed a willing kiss from them.

“ You seem to have made sure of your pardon,”
 said she, smiling, “ before you committed the
 “ offence. But do not you think you are hurrying
 “ matters forward a little too fast ?”

“ Can you blame me for being impatient to pos-
 “ sess all that can make me happy, that can make
 “ me forget my past misfortunes, in you ?”

“ You may not receive much blame from me, per-
 “ haps ; but there are some impediments in the
 “ way, that may be equally disagreeable to us
 “ both. I cannot marry till I am one-and-twenty :
 “ it is true, I want but a few months of attaining
 “ that age ; till then I am under Mr. Wilcox’s
 “ care, by whom I am very sure I shall be restrain-
 “ ed from marrying, and more especially you. My
 “ poor father was so much imposed on by his pretend-
 “ ed forbearance, and his good behaviour, that he
 “ made him executor ; and for what cause
 “ I know not, thus restricted me in the dis-
 “ posal of myself where my heart would willingly
 “ confer my hand. I am convinced that his mo-
 “ deration was all hypocrisy, and that he has a
 “ bad and villainous heart”

“ Ayel” said Rigby, you surprize me. What
 “ instances have you known of this ?”

“ Several I can guess at, but I shall not mention
 “ any till I am certain of them. One however is,
 “ that he has taken away a woman whom a gen-
 “ tleman in this neighbourhood kept, and has her
 “ in London. I suppose his frequent visits there
 “ are on her account, though he pretends to his
 “ wife

“ wife that they are occasioned by my business. I
“ cannot think of causing my poor cousin the
“ vexation that this knowledge of his infidelity
“ would give her ; it therefore remains a secret
“ with me. I am greatly mistaken too, if he
“ paired his fortune very much ; and, if so, I am
“ sure he will make free with mine. That he is
“ welcome to do : but I do not know how it is,
“ I have some fears about me that I cannot get rid
“ of.—If I was to die he would inherit the estate ;
“ my marrying would cut off all his hopes ; there-
“ fore I have every thing to fear from him.”

“ He dares not injure you,” replied Rigby, his
resentment alarmed at the thought “ he dares not.
“ There is no crime he can commit against me that
“ I will not pardon, but that !—By heaven, he had
“ better take a lion by the beard. There should
“ be no place sacred enough to protect him from
“ my rage ; and, though he should fly to earth’s
“ extremest verge, I will pursue him with unceas-
“ ing vengeance.”

“ Have patience. There is nothing done yet.
“ I am sure he has no regard for you. He remem-
“ bers what you did formerly, and bears you no
“ good-will for it. I am apprehensive—I am sus-
“ picious—Perhaps there may be no good grounds
“ for my being so. This reflection has produced
“ that melancholy in me lately, which you have so
“ kindly endeavoured to dissipate. I cannot com-
“ municate these notions to Mrs. Wilcox ;
“ as her husband whom she tenderly loves,
“ is the cause of my suspicions. You are the
“ only friend I can trust, in whom I confide ;
“ the only person whom I wish to acquaint with
“ it.”

A blush interrupted her speech.—“ Thus let me
“ be ever favoured,” said Rigby, clasping her to
his enraptured bosom ; “ and, when I forfeit your
“ good

“ good opinion of me, may that hour be may last.
 “ Lydia, lovely Lydia ! banish your apprehensions,
 “ and dismiss your fears. Your virtue is the care
 “ of heaven, which delights in its own likeness.
 “ Permit me then to attend you with assiduous care,
 “ to watch your steps, to hover round you like your
 “ guardian genius, and ward of all danger from her
 “ I love. This shall be my task, till the hour re-
 “ plete with ineffable joy, shall arrive, in which I
 “ shall receive the hand that is to bless me for my
 “ future life. I care not for your cousin’s hatred,
 “ nor do I fear his resentment, only as it may af-
 “ fect you. Thou art too dear to me, my beloved.
 “ Lydia ! for me to forsake or neglect your welfare.
 “ What I am able to do shall be done, as well to
 “ guard you from harm, as to prevent it.”

Lydia thanked him for his care, assured him that
 she believed his professions of love, and convinc-
 ed him that they were not disregarded. He had
 every reason to believe that her affection for him was
 mutual. Had he known the truth, he might have
 found it superior, and attended with those inexpress-
 sible tenderesses which the softer sex necessarily feel
 under the influence of the gentlest of passions. Rigby
 found himself beloved. He was allowed every famili-
 arity and intimacy that virtue could demand, or mo-
 desty grant. But though absolutely possessed of her
 heart, he treated her upon every occasion, with the
 greatest delicacy. The most refined notions of honour
 ruled his breast, and his respectful, yet affectionate
 behaviour, encreased the lovely Lydia’s passion for
 her amiable admirer.

Wilcox’s absence was most favourable to the lo-
 vers, who enjoyed themselves then ; for Rigby did
 not chuse to visit at his house while he was in the
 country—He did not trouble them much ; his stay
 was always short when he did come, and that was
 very seldom. He was obliged to save appearances,
 even

even to his wife, who was then very big with child. She was as much alarmed at his continually residing in London, as Miss Bennet was, but she never hinted at the trouble it gave her. Her patience was as remarkable as her prudence; and she seemed to make herself happy in the approaching union of the young couple, who both truly regarded her.



B O O K XI.

TH U S time passed away: whilst Lydia and Rigby were mutually impatient for the arrival of that hour, which should set them at liberty; but he knew not what he was to go through, before that could happen.

He was walking alone, near the house one day when a countryman accosted him, and asked "if he was not the gentleman that lived at farmer Wilkins's?"

He replied, "he lived there."

"Aye, I thought so," said he.

"And your name is Ri-Ri-Rigby, or Risby."

"Yes, it is: What have you to say to me?"

"Why, I have a letter for you that's all."

"Let me see it."

After some small search, first in one pocket, and then in another, he produced it. Rigby took it out of his hand, and looking attentively on the superscription, turned pale: his hands trembled, he viewed the seal; dropped the unopened billet on the earth, and gazing at it wildly for some moments, exclaimed, with uplifted eyes, "Gracious God, support me! Where could this come from?"

The

The peasant, who was astonished at his emotions, replied, "That he had it from a man, who was
" in the little house at the bottom of the hill there,
" who said he would wait till he went back a-
" gain."

Rigby paid but little attention to him. "Sure," said he, as he stooped to take the letter up, "my
" eyes cannot have deceived me, my senses cannot
" err so widely; and if it is as I suppose, some-
" thing miraculous must have caused it" With eager
haste he broke it open, and to his surprize, read
these words:

" Be not astonished, my dear Rigby, thy friend
" yet lives; lives to acknowledge the mercies of
" his God, and to be happy in thy friendship. How
" this came to pass, I long to communicate to thy
" faithful ear. I am anxious to see thee, to press
" thee to my heart: but ere I could venture to ap-
" pear before you, I sent this to inform you of my
" existence, that I might not surprize you too much.
" Delay not to see me, but hasten to the arms of
" thy restored friend.

RICHARD HILLASTON."

" It is true, he yet lives! Restored indeed."

" Where got you this letter?"

" From a man at the house at the bottom of the
" Hill."

" Then fly to him," said he, " and tell him I
" wait here for him with the utmost impatience;
" delay not on your peril."

This extraordinary behaviour, which the rustic
could not comprehend, made him imagine the gen-
tleman was mad. He did not stay to be twice bid-
den, but set off as fast as his legs could carry him.
So great was Rigby's surprize, and so violent his e-
motions,

motions, that he could not believe this matter to be real : he read the letter several times over ; he knew the writing to be that of his friend ; but so mysterious was this whole transaction, that he could not tell what to think of it, or how to reconcile himself to it. He stood almost on the very same spot where the letter was delivered to him, with folded hands ; his looks bent on the ground, in the posture of contemplation : he was really lost in thought. At last, lifting up his eyes, he beheld his friend coming towards him, with the countryman, who pointed out the spot where he stood, and then left him. Rigby dared not trust his sight ; he concluded that his senses had deceived him : his legs were rivetted to the earth : amazement chained his tongue, and deprived him of all his powers. He stared wildly at his friend, who still approached him. His cheeks were flushed with joy, to see Rigby again ; his eyes were suffused with the tear of pleasure, the big drop trembled as it fell. “ It is he, it is my friend ! My long-lost much-lamented friend,” said Rigby, as he flew to him and caught him in his arms. Hillaston received and returned the embrace with transport. It was some time before either could speak. “ Oh, Hillaston,” said Rigby, “ what trouble has the supposition of your death caused me ! How many tears have I shed, in company with your worthy mother and sister, upon your account ! But you are much altered in your appearance : your face no longer wears that gloom, which formerly overshadowed it ; your eyes have lost their ferocity, they are now placid and gentle ; but your face is pale, and you appear greatly emaciated. Explain this mystery to me. Surely, surely, you could not write that terrible letter, which has occasioned me so much grief without some dreadful determination in your soul. I have ten thousand questions to ask you.”

— I know

“ I know it, Rigby, and in every one of them will
“ satisfy you, if your affectionate impatience does
“ not prevent me. I am truly sorry for the trouble
“ I gave you, by that account of my resolution to
“ destroy myself. I cannot think of it now, with-
“ out horror ; though I am greatly flattered, by
“ the regard you have shewn for me. The altera-
“ tion you observe in me, is occasioned by a change
“ in my heart ; I am no longer the victim of a
“ criminal and unnatural passion ; it appears to me
“ as a dream, which passed away, and is no more
“ remembered. There is not a greater difference
“ in my person, than in my mind ; how that change
“ was effected, I will now inform you.

“ I left you, my friend, I remember, happy in
“ the acknowledgement of the mutual passion which
“ you and the charming Maria burned with.”

“ Ah, Hillaston, that has been the source of much
“ woe unto me ; how, you shall know hereafter ;
“ proceed, and fear no more interruptions from
“ me.”

“ The prospect of your happiness with that a-
“ miable girl, gave me the greatest pleasure upon
“ your account, but encreased my private misery.

“ Every one can be happy, but me,” said I to
myself ; “ impiously reproaching Heaven for the
“ depravity of my own heart. The pleasures of
“ social life, of domestic joys, of nuptial bliss, are
“ denied only to me ; I ought not to live in that
“ society, of which I cannot be called a member,
“ when the felicity of others creates my unhappi-
“ ness. I will relinquish it then—No other world
“ can be so productive of woe to me, as this has
“ been. What enjoyment have I here ? My life is
“ a perpetual conflict of reason and nature, against
“ the most shocking and horrid passion. Be it mine
“ put to an end to it.

“ These

“ These were my reflections——But I had enter-
 “ tained some doubts, when an incident determined
 “ me. I had attained the entrance of a little
 “ pleasant village, about the evening, on a
 “ green, through which my path led, where some
 “ children were playing. Close to it, on one
 “ side, was a neat though small house: my eye
 “ cursorily surveyed these objects, without paying
 “ any attention to them, for my mind was entirely
 “ ingrossed by the consideration of my own miseries,
 “ and I pursued my walk, till I reached the spot
 “ where the children were. At that instant, a
 “ mad dog, pursued by a number of people, rushed
 “ furiously out of a lane that opened on the green,
 “ and then towards the groupe of happy infants
 “ who were sporting in peace and fancied safety.
 “ The noise the people made alarmed them, and
 “ stopped me; they soon perceived their danger,
 “ and instantly dispersed different ways. One
 “ beautiful boy, about six years old, towards whom
 “ the frantic animal was running, flew to me for
 “ protection, pale with fear. He had scarcely got
 “ hold of my coat, when the dog, who was making
 “ directly to me, came within reach of my arm:
 “ I struck at, and providentially killed him:
 “ his brains flew all about, and he fell lifeless at
 “ my feet. The people gathered about him, from
 “ his size and fury, the object of their terror, and
 “ eyed him at a distance with silent apprehension,
 “ yet dubious of their security. The little boy still
 “ kept hold of my coat, and remained struck dumb
 “ with fear. At that instant, a shrill cry was
 “ heard, ‘ Where is my child! Where is my
 “ child?’ The croud opened the circle, to give
 “ passage to a lady genteelly dressed, possessed of
 “ an agreeable person, and an handsome face,
 “ but at that moment, was the picture of horror;
 “ her eyes staring wildly, her hair discomposed:
 “ almost breathless and pallid, did she run or rather

“ fly to the spot where he then stood. As soon as
“ she had cast her eyes on the boy, besmeared with
“ the bloody brains of the slaughtered beast, she
“ fainted away. The child ran to her. Happily,
“ she was supported by some of the bystanders.
“ Her husband arrived, he soon recovered her.
“ Where is my boy ?” was the first question she
“ asked. ‘ Here I am, Mamma.’ ‘ And are you
“ hurt, my darling ?’—‘ No, indeed I am not ; but
“ the dog would have bit me, if that gentleman
“ had not killed him.’—Instantaneous was the effect
“ this account had ; her returning blood rushed in-
“ to her face, and bespoke her joy. She clasped
“ the child, still dearer to her by this great escape,
“ to her panting bosom, and bestowed a thousand
“ caresses on him. The father’s eyes bespoke his
“ impatience to have his darling son in safety, en-
“ circled in his arms. He snatched the boy from
“ the anxious mother, and returned thanks to Hea-
“ ven for his preservation ; his soul dissolved in
“ gratitude, and paternal fondness : I was not for-
“ gotten ; they both came up to me ; their thanks
“ were innumerable, their acknowledgments bound-
“ less ; they insisted on my returning with them to
“ their house. I endeavoured in vain to excuse
“ myself ; the child joined in their entreaties ;
“ there was no resisting his innocent persuasions.
“ They placed me between them, and in this man-
“ ner we proceeded to their house, which I had
“ before observed contiguous to the green. As we
“ approached it, a little girl, about five years old,
“ ran out to them crying. She went up to her bro-
“ ther, and throwing her arms about his neck, com-
“ plained that the maid would not let her come out
“ to see him. The boy kissed, and told her the
“ story in his own manner. The happy parents
“ saw their pleasure encreased, in the endearments
“ of

“ of their charming offspring. The tear of joy
“ trembled in the afflicted mother’s eye ; and a
“ smile of content sat on the tender father’s face.
“ They looked at each other, with a conscious sa-
“ tisfaction, and derived new joys from beholding
“ the innocent pledges of their virtuous love. My
“ soul callous through misery, my heart torn with
“ contending passions, saw, but could not feel, this
“ scene of rapture. Instead of softening my woes,
“ it augmented them.—‘ I shall never know what
“ the joys of a father are,’ “ said I to myself ; ‘ I
“ shall never experience rapture from the embrace
“ of a child. Wretch ! Wretch that I am ! Can
“ there be a state of perdition worse than this !’ I
“ found my torments grow intolerable, and resolved
“ to stay no longer in a place that rendered me
“ miserable. ‘ I must leave you,’ said I to them.
“ Ask me not why. Happy pair ! May heaven en-
“ crease your felicity ! Farewell.’

“ As I spoke, I strode away with all the expedi-
“ tion I could, and left them dumb with astonish-
“ ment. When I had escaped the eye of observa-
“ tion, I gave a loose to my griefs, and indulged
“ my sorrows. How much did I lament my dread-
“ ful situation ! How poignant was my anguish !
“ How piercing was my affliction ! That night I
“ spent under a tree, and no sleep closed my eyes, or
“ rest composed my perturbed spirit. Long before
“ day appeared I pursued my journey. To what
“ end did I travel ! Repose awaited me not, nor was
“ there any cessation from my griefs. I could on-
“ ly seek it in death. That state would afford quiet
“ to me : there only could I hope for rest.

“ The road I followed led me to a pretty large
“ town. I had taken my resolution to put an end
“ to myself ; and, in pursuance of it, I went into
“ an apothecary’s shop, and asked for some lau-
“ danum. The journeyman refused to serve me,
“ but

“ but called his master, who politely asked me what
“ I wanted with the medicine I enquired for. I
“ framed a story that prevailed on him to give it to
“ me. As I had told him it was for a third person,
“ he cautioned me concerning the administering of
“ it. I pretended to listen to him with attention.
“ He delayed me some time before he gave it to
“ me, being obliged, as he said to go up stairs for
“ it, where he always kept those things which he
“ thought improper to be left in a shop, at the
“ mercy and discretion of servants. He came
“ down at length, and chatted with me ; I paid
“ him, and departed in triumph with my purchase.
“ I walked on. The means of ridding me from
“ my trouble was now in my own hands ; the
“ thought gave peace. In the afternoon I arrived
“ at an inn, and desiring a room to be prepared for
“ me, I called for pen and ink, and sat down to
“ write to you. The deadly potion remained
“ by my side. During the writing of that
“ epistle I drank it, and finished the letter. It was
“ sent off to you. My mind had now disengaged
“ itself from all worldly matters, and I was on the
“ road to *that country from whose bourne no travel-*
“ *ler returns.* I sought for rest ; but was I sure I
“ should find it there ? I began to doubt, and one
“ scruple induced another. There was then no
“ remedy, no alternative for me. The potent
“ draught was now mingled with my blood, it had
“ crept through all my veins. I was no longer for
“ this world : but had I a right to rush into the
“ other, at my own will and pleasure ? ‘ I did not
“ place myself here : am I justifiable in quitting this
“ post in which I have been stationed, whenever it
“ may suit my own convenience or desire ?’ Thus
“ argued I with myself—‘An account will be requir-
“ ed of me of my actions : and how shall I excuse
“ the

' the murder of myself ? Am I at greater liberty to
 ' kill myself than another person ? If not, I have
 ' done evil, I have sinned ; and so short is my time
 ' upon earth, that I cannot repent of that sin. Then
 ' eternal torment is prepared for me. Horrid,
 ' dismal reflection ! What are the pains and woes
 ' of this life, which is finite, and but of a short du-
 ' ration, to tortures that never end ; are infinite,
 ' and extend through all eternity ! A space that
 ' the understanding of man comprehendeth not !
 ' An extension of time that hath no period : it endur-
 ' eth for ever !' I could not pray. My suppli-
 " cations were turned into curses in my mouth ;
 " and could I entreat mercy from that God whom
 " I had just offended, and whose image I should
 " speedily cause to be defaced ! I can give you no
 " idea of my sufferings : my dear friend, they are
 " not to be described. Horror seized me ; I trem-
 " bled with fear ; a cold sweat bedewed my shiver-
 " ing limbs. I stood awed, confounded, self-con-
 " victed, as if in the actual presence of the justly in-
 " censed Deity. My apprehension subsided a lit-
 " tle ; I grew more calm, but was surprised that
 " I had not yet felt the effects of the mortal dose
 " that was in my bowels. I thought to divert my
 " attention from my horrid situation by reading.
 " A book lay in the window ; I opened it, and
 " found it was the sacred volume, that contains the
 " precepts of our religion. ' This may afford me
 ' some comfort,' said I : ' The God of nature speaks
 ' mercy to sinners. He invites the weary and the
 ' laden to receive rest. I will read, and be com-
 ' posed.' I opened the book, and read. The
 " Psalms of David presented themselves to me,
 ' David,' said I, ' was a sinner, yet he repented, and
 ' was forgiven. Let me find comfort in his
 ' words.' But there was none for me ! These
 " sentences augmented my terror. Well, I re-
 " member them—

For

For we are consumed by thine anger : and by thy wrath are we troubled.

Thou hast set our iniquities before thee : our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.

Who knoweth the power of thy wrath ?

—‘And I shall experience it ! On me, the object of his indignation, will that dreaded wrath be exercised.’

“ Thus I exclaimed in an agony of terror. My hair rose an end, my flesh crept on my bones. ‘I will yet read another psalm,’ said I, ‘turning over the leaves, and fixing my eyes on the following :’

Whither shall I go from thy spirit ? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence ?

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there : If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea :

Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right-hand shall hold me.

If I say, Surely the night shall cover me : Even the night shall be light about me.

Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee : But the night shineth as the day : The darkness and the light are both alike to thee .

‘ And how shall I escape from his rage, whose omnipotence I have sinned against ? Is there any hope of mercy for such a wretch as I am ?’

The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit : the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me.

‘ Already I feel thy powerful vengeance, God of might : and let my submission to thy justice expiate my crimes.’

‘ I started

“ I started from my seat, and threw myself on the
“ floor, in a paroxysm of frenzy and despair. How
“ long I remained there I know not ; but, when
“ my senses returned, I found myself in bed.—
“ Where am I ? Do I yet live ?—“ I started up.
“ My surprize and astonishment cannot be describ-
“ ed. A man approached the bed.—‘How do you
“ find yourself now, Sir ?’ “ I stared wildly at him,
“ and sunk down again. I endeavoured to recol-
“ lect what was passed. It appeared as the
“ face of a dream. ‘ I am sensible that I yet exist,’
“ said I to myself. ‘ What miracle has Providence
“ exerted in my favour, to rescue me thus from
“ the jaws of death, and a state of endless perdition ?
“ What thanks do I owe to the God of mercy, for
“ redeeming me from eternal misery ! It shall be
“ the employment of my life to pay them.’

“ I again rose up in the bed, and demanded of
“ the gentleman, who still looked at me very atten-
“ tively, with much compassion and benignity in
“ his countenance, who he was. ‘ Do not you re-
“ collect me, Sir ?’—‘If I had, I should not have
“ asked you that question—Who are you ? And
“ why are you here ?’—Do you remember your
“ purchasing some laudanum from an apothecary the
“ day before yesterday ?—‘ I do, and you are the
“ man.’—“ I am, and, instead of the mortal dose
“ you wanted, gave you a powerful soporific”—
“ And why didst thou do so ?’—“ Because I imagin-
“ ed and feared your design to be against yourself,
“ from a wildness in your eyes, and a distraction that
“ was very visible in your manner. I amused you
“ till I had pointed you out to my servant, who had
“ orders to follow you unnoticed, till he saw you
“ housed, and then to inform me where you were.
“ He obeyed my commands punctually, and I now
“ inform you of the deceit I made use of ; and if I
“ can judge from the situation in which you were
“ found, you cannot be offended at the imposition.”

F

— So

“ So far from it, that I shall look upon you here-
“ after as my best friend, and my greatest benefac-
“ tor ; as on one who, as the instrument of a merci-
“ ful God, has saved me from the commission of a
“ sin that I now shudder at the thoughts of.”

“ I arose, and with difficulty dressed myself, the
“ agitations I had undergone had so much weaken-
“ ed me. I embraced my good genius, the apothecary,
“ and thanked him with great earnestness. I
“ offered to pay him the expences of his journey,
“ and for his attendance. He refused both. His
“ fortune was easy, he said ; and the only gratifi-
“ cation he desired, was to see me composed and
“ happy. I redoubled my acknowledgments for
“ such unexpected generosity. He seemed very desi-
“ rous of knowing what could induce me to make
“ this rash attempt on myself : but I evaded all his
“ questions ; and, when he found I was determined to
“ be silent on that head he desisted from his enquiries.
“ I found myself inclinable to take some sustenance ;
“ but when coffee and toast were brought, I could
“ touch neither. Mr. Green, for so was the apo-
“ thecary called, was surprised at this ; and on ex-
“ amining my pulse and tongue, found every symp-
“ tom of an approaching fever. He let me blood
“ copiously, ordered me to bed again, and recom-
“ mended me to the care of a very skilful physician,
“ to whose knowledge and attention, under God,
“ I am indebted for my life. I lay in a dangerous
“ way near three weeks. At last the disorder had a
“ happy turn, and I began to recover, though very
“ slowly. The hand of the Almighty effected my
“ cure in this time of danger.

“ As I recovered, the traces of my former torment-
“ ing passion vanished insensibly ; and, as my health
“ returned, I found a peace and tranquility in my
“ breast, never known before. When I was suffici-
“ ently re-established, I took short journies hither
“ to

“ to you, as I learned in the neighbourhood you
 “ were in this part of the country. Thus preserved
 “ by the immediate intervention of divine power, I
 “ live but to adore the hand that supported and
 “ protected me ! to dry the tears from my unhappy
 “ mother’s eyes, and to fill her heart with joy : to
 “ enjoy the return of reason and peace, unobscured
 “ by any clouds of passion, or unnatural desire : to
 “ live with thee Rigby, the friend of my heart, and
 “ the partner of my fortune.”

“ My soul rejoices at the great, the happy alte-
 “ ration in your sentiments, my dear Hillaſton. You
 “ can never be thankful enough to that Providence
 “ which has ſo ſignally protected you. I congratu-
 “ late you, I exult in your reſtoration to reaſon and
 “ to life ; for ſurely the painful ſtate of conflicting
 “ paſſions which you ſuſtained, was a daily, an
 “ hourly death.

“ Since I laſt ſaw you I have been made acquaint-
 “ ed with woe, and miſfortune is become familiar
 “ to me. But ſuch has been the goodneſs of God
 “ to me, that I have been able to overcome paſſi-
 “ ons ſimilar to yours, which might have deſtroyed
 “ me.”

He began to relate to his friend what had hap-
 pened in his abſence ; and walking to and fro on the
 green, where they had this conference, had juſt
 turned about, with their faces towards Wilkins’s
 houſe. Engaged in earneſt diſcourſe, they perceiv-
 ed not Hannah Wilkins, who was in ſearch of Rig-
 by, to inform him dinner was ready, moving towards
 them.

Hannah knew that the green was a favourite walk
 of his, and went thither in purſuit of him. She ſaw
 ſomebody with him, and the form of the ſtranger
 was like her Hillaſton’s, but his back was to her.
 As they turned about, ſhe ſent her whole ſoul from
 her eyes, to inform her of the truth of this circum-
 ſtance.

stance. She instantly recognized his features, but she could not believe her senses. Alarmed as she was at this extraordinary sight, she could neither retreat, or go on. Her powers were all chained up by fear and surprize. As he approached her, she could no longer support the various passions that tore her bosom; and she sunk down. Hillaston, who was not at a great distance, caught her ere she fell to the ground. Rigby observed her only by his friend's flying to her assistance, for his attention was entirely engaged by the recollection of his own story. But the moment he perceived Hannah's situation, and saw Hillaston supporting her, the cause of her fainting occurred to him instantly, and he immediately ran to her assistance. As soon as she opened her eyes, they were turned upon Hillaston, whom she gazed wildly at, crying out, "Oh, my God! it is Mr. Hillaston."

"It is indeed, my dear Hannah."

At the sound of his voice she returned again. Rigby, who knew the cause, desired his friend to withdraw from her sight, as the surprize occasioned by her seeing him, whom she imagined to be dead, had quite overcome her, especially as she had been but in a weak state of health lately. He obeyed; and Rigby with difficulty, recovered his fair friend to life again.

"Did not I see Mr. Hillaston here, just now," said she? "Or was it only an apparition?"

"You really saw himself, Hannah."

"Then he yet lives."

"He does."

"And you have imposed upon me by a false account of his death."

"No, I assure you I believed him dead, and was as much surprized as you were."

"How have I betrayed myself! How have I exposed

“ posed the weakness of my heart ! I shall die with
“ shame.”

She burst into tears, and threw herself upon Rigby’s bosom. He pitied, and endeavoured to compose her, by assuring her of his friendship, and silence upon the cause of her surprize. He then, with her permission, called Hillaston to him, and her pallid lips trembled while she received his salute. Rigby left them together, proceeding slowly to the house, while he hastened to apprize the farmer and his wife of his friend’s recovery, lest they might be affected by his too sudden appearance.

Hillaston perceived Hannah’s emotions, though he was ignorant of the real cause of them. He requested her to support herself by his arm ; she obeyed : he observed to her, that he was sorry to see her look so pale, and feared she had been ill. She replied, she had. She was hardly able to answer him. Her heart, so long oppressed with grief, was now overpowered with joy. But the change was so rapid, that it had nearly proved fatal to her, in the weak state she then was.

They were prevented from farther conversation by the appearance of Wilkins and Rigby. The farmer, overjoyed at the news of his friend’s being yet alive, ran out, to congratulate him on his recovery, and bid him welcome to Berkshire. All was joy and pleasure. In the afternoon Rigby took his friend out, and informed him of the situation of his affairs, and related every thing that had happened since he left him at his mother’s, to that moment. —“ You have not been without your sufferings,
“ my friend ! but I hope they are now at an end.
“ The similarity of our fate has been very remarkable. Your passion for Maria was accidental ;
“ but my unhappy attachment to my sister arose from
“ my earliest youth : it was therefore so much the
“ more difficult for me to conquer it. Thanks to

“ heaven, it is at last happily effected ; and though
 “ my life was in hazard by the conflict, I esteem
 “ my freedom cheaply purchased. Happiness a-
 “ waits us both, Rigby. In Lydia’s arms you will
 “ forget your past troubles, and I feel a hope that I
 “ shall experience peace and comfort, rise in my
 “ breast.”

Rigby went over to Miss Bennet that evening as usual, and in part informed her of his friend’s history. She rejoiced with him, that he was yet living, and begged to see him. The next day, Hillaston addressed Rigby.

“ I can know no happiness,” said he, “ till my
 “ mother and sister shall be made acquainted
 “ with my being yet alive, and so happily restored
 “ to my reason. I long to hold that tender mother
 “ to my breast, and to embrace my dear and afflict-
 “ ed sister ; but how to break the matter to them I
 “ know not. My abrupt appearance before them,
 “ who are persuaded of my death, would be attend-
 “ ed with the most dangerous consequences. It
 “ would be as improper to write to them by the
 “ post ; they would not believe a letter to be real.
 “ What shall I do, Rigby ? Will you take the trou-
 “ ble of going there for me, can you quit your Ly-
 “ dia for so long a time ?”

“ I will do any thing to promote your welfare,
 “ Hillaston,” said he ; “ and I believe this method
 “ of breaking the matter to your family, is the
 “ most proper and best you can propose. I will go
 “ there in a day or two, but you must not expect
 “ me to stay long, for I must return as expeditiously
 “ as possible.”

“ As soon as you please : but you cannot blame
 “ me for wishing to communicate this matter to
 “ them directly. It is absolutely necessary.”

They went over to Mrs. Wilcox’s, where they dined. Miss Bennet remembered Hillaston again, but

but he was so much altered for the better, that he was extremely pleasing to them both: he had a great deal of good nature, mixed with an easy politeness; delivered, in a very spirited and sensible manner, the observations he had made in his walks; and was not destitute of humour. He regarded the glances of mutual affection, of heart-felt satisfaction, of joy and rapture, that passed between Lydia and his friend, with a great degree of pleasure: it increased his happiness. His honest heart exulted in the good fortune of his friend: as they returned home, he could not help congratulating Rigby.

"Providence respects our virtue," said he, "and is determined to reward it. If wealth, beauty and love can create happiness, you will surely be happy; if there is a blessed state on earth, it is to be found in mutual love. I fear I shall never experience it, I am not formed for winning a woman's affections; but I could make a good husband I think."

"You are mistaken in your suppositions of not being able to win a woman's affections. What would you think of a woman possessed of virtue, honour, and real delicacy of sentiment, who could admire the goodness of your heart, and the excellency of your manners, through that cloud of distraction which veiled them, and which she lamented at the time she felt the tenderest sensations; and whose grief for your supposed death, almost ended her days, though in the bloom of youth: Could you love such a one?"

"I could grapple her to my soul with hooks of steel: my gratitude, my honour would be all concerned, and she would not repent the preference she had given me. But I cannot believe that she exists; tell me Rigby, is it true?"

"It is, really"

"Then tell me, I conjure thee, who it is."

“ That I cannot do : chance made me acquaint-
 “ ed with her attachment ; judgment should direct
 “ you, you would not be long at a loss ; but it can
 “ never pass my lips, which have promised to con-
 “ ceal it.”

“ You have made me very uneasy : would to hea-
 “ ven I knew who it was, but it shall go hard with
 “ me, if I do not find it out.”

The next day was fixed on for Rigby's journey in-
 to Cambridgeshire : in the morning he went to see
 Miss Bennet.

“ Why hangs that cloud upon your brow, my
 “ dearest Lydia ; you look dejected and melan-
 “ cholly : are you ill ? inform me what ails you,
 “ to cause that change in your countenance.”

“ I have been disturbed by the most horrid dreams
 “ all night that ever I had ; and they have made so
 “ strong an impression on me, and so terrified me,
 “ that I have not recovered myself.”

“ Let not shadows disturb you, my charming Ly-
 “ dia ; thy innocence and virtue defend thee against
 “ fear.”

“ I am not apt to pay any great attention to
 “ dreams,—but such a succession of them ! I thought
 “ I had you in my arms, all covered with blood !
 “ I awaked, and found myself all of a tremble.
 “ Again I dozed, and thought we were walking in a
 “ meadow together, and all of a sudden you sunk
 “ from beside me, and was gone I knew not whi-
 “ ther. While I lamented you, some frightful spec-
 “ tre carried me to the top of an high mountain,
 “ and plunged me down a precipice, which I was
 “ an age in falling. I had many other dreams
 “ equally horrid.”

“ Do not fright yourself with effects that proceed
 “ from so many different causes. I hope no misfor-
 “ tune will happen to you till I return, and I will
 “ make my stay as short as may be.”

“ Why !

“ Why! where are you going?” said she with an affrighted look.

“ I am going into Cambridgeshire, to inform Mrs. Hillaſton, of her ſon’s being yet alive. She is a worthy woman; and the friendship of her ſon, and her regard for me, demand this from me. I will not ſtay: my beſt beloved Lydia, do not be alarmed.”

“ Did you not promiſe that you would not leave me?” ſaid ſhe, looking at him with ineffable tendereſs, the tears ruſhing into her eyes: “ I ſee how you keep your word.”

“ Oh Lydia, your doubts diſtreſs me beyond expreſſion. I did promiſe you not to leave you: but cannot my abſence be excuſed for ſo ſhort a time? I will have a reliance on Providence, to guard thee from danger: without that, my aid would avail but little. Do not you be uneaſy.”

“ I am miſerable, and I cannot help it: my ſoul forebodes ſome dreadful miſfortunes.”

“ You are low ſpirited only, my love, theſe dreams have terrified you: be aſſured of my fidelity, my affection, my inviolable love; and no power on earth ſhall keep me long from you. I ſhall be wretched till I ſee you again, till I am bleſſed with thy ſmiles. Do not diſtreſs yourſelf and me,” ſaid he, kiſſing off the tears that trinckled in ſilent ſorrow down her pale and frigid cheeks, by theſe groundleſs apprehenſions: I will return in ten days, or a fortnight at fartheſt.”

“ Do not go then,” ſaid ſhe, preſſing his hand in hers, “ but ſtay with me: I ſhall never ſee you again.”

With the moſt endearing blandiſhments did he ſoothe her diſturbed mind, and conſole her grief. At laſt ſhe conſented to let him depart. “ Ah,” ſaid ſhe, “ if you will go, I cannot prevent you; but with the utmoſt reluctance do I let you ſeparate

“ yourself from me. I hope we shall meet again at
 “ your return : but I have the most unaccountable
 “ fears that we shall not : but you laugh at my
 “ fears.”

“ By every sacred power, did not this very ur-
 “ gent business call me, I pay so great a respect to
 “ your tender tears, that I would comply with your
 “ desires, and remain here.”

“ Well,” replied she, “ I will consent to your
 “ departure, and only request you to make haste
 “ back.”

He promised he would, and sealed those promises upon her lips. Her tears wetted his cheek, which he pressed close to hers ; nor could he prevent at that instant, dissolved as he was with tenderness and love, the escape of one tear to accompany her's. He tore himself away from her with great unwillingness : he had never experienced such affection from her before. He was quite unmanned by her behaviour : and though his reason told him that her fears were without foundation, yet he was very much concerned at them.

He related to Hillaston, who accompanied him part of the way in the afternoon, what had passed between him and Lydia ; recommending it to him to see her often, in the few days that he should stay behind him in Berkshire. For it had been agreed between them, that when Rigby had prepared the way, he should follow him home ; for he not only longed to see his mother and sister, but had great occasion for money to pay the persons who had taken care of him in his illness, and he could not procure any without going home. What Rigby had said to him, concerning this woman that had taken such a liking to him, was always uppermost in his mind. Though ignorant of the person, he could not help feeling some favourable sentiments rise in his bosom towards her. “ Her heart must be suscepti-
 “ ble

“ ble of pity, it must be possessed of humanity,” said he to himself. “ Could I be the object of love in a state of frenzy! No; it was compassion for my distraction first inspired her breast with tender thoughts. I wish I knew who it was, only that I might thank her.”

His uneasiness encreased every hour, it grew painful at last! it made him thoughtful. Hannah’s vigilant eye perceived an alteration in his countenance, and was concerned at it. Two of the three days he passed away in this state: on the third, walking in the garden, he observed a piece of paper crumpled up in a careless manner, lying on the ground before him; it had the appearance of being lately dropped. An irresistible curiosity impelled him to take it up. He opened it: the writing on it seemed to be that of a woman. To his no small surprise he read these words.

“ The conduct of a virtuous woman, should resemble a stream of pure water, which, as it runs, discovers its bottom. All dissimulation is designed to conceal a crime, for virtue has no occasion for screen.” This was Hillaston’s sentiment—“ He is gone—But shall I never forget——”

The rest was torn off. He could not conceive what this meant—He might have made use of such expressions—But when he knew not—The remark at the bottom of it was still more puzzling—He strolled about lost in conjecture—He began at last to fix upon Hannah Wilkins—Conviction rushed upon him—He reflected upon his former behaviour to her—her surprize at seeing him—Besides, Rigby’s being so well acquainted with her sentiments, confirmed him in his notions. He was not displeased at tracing out this secret; and he was still better pleased at finding Hannah Wilkins to be the person he wished to know. He had always a great friendship for her—he esteemed her good qualities. His heart could

could be easily softened into love. On one proof did he depend for certainty as to the hand-writing of this paper—He contrived to get her to write a few words—Upon comparison he found the characters to be exactly alike.—“Tis well,” said he to himself, overjoyed at the success of his scheme; “if I can render my life happy, Hannah, I am willing to spend mine with thee.”—

From that moment he redoubled his attention to her, and mixed a tenderness in his manner and words that she had never perceived in him before. He took leave of her in the most affectionate manner, told her he should soon return, and had something particular to say to her, that he hoped would not displease her. Her blushes bespoke her confusion, while she stammered out that she should be always glad to see him—“Perhaps,” said she, when he departed, “he sees my weakness, and despises me for it—perhaps he may also love—but I fear it is not me.”

In the mean time Rigby pursued his journey, and arrived at Mrs. Hillaston’s without any accident. It was near four months since he had been there before, and then had just received so great a shock, that he looked more like one dead than alive. They were pleased to see that he had recovered his health and spirits again; but still an unavailing sorrow prevailed in the family, still the tear fell to Hillaston’s memory, and the sigh rose at the mention of his name. How should he acquaint them with this happy reverse that awaited them? It required all his skill and tenderness. As they sat engaged in social chat that evening, he mentioned several instances of persons, whom their friends had supposed to be dead, having been, nevertheless, restored to their families again. Ah,” said the old Lady, “such things might have formerly happened, and may now—but I am not to be so happy.”

“You

“ You can’t tell, Madam ; the goodness of God
“ is not circumscribed, nor are you excluded from
“ his mercy.”

“ I hope not ; yet I am wretched—I loved my hap-
“ less son—I loved him perhaps too well—but sure
“ a mother’s fondness cannot be a crime. While
“ he lived his senses were disturbed, and he created
“ grief instead of pleasure for me. A dreadful dis-
“ order carried him, in a moment, to his grave, and
“ no friend near him to close his eyes. Is he not
“ dead ? Did not you-yourself inform me of it !”

“ Indeed I did, Madam, but——”

“ Why that hesitation ; could you be so barbar-
“ ous as to impose on me—you could not, I know
“ your humanity and goodness ; you are incapable of
“ such a thing. Besides, you wept for his death, and
“ your tears were not feigned ”

“ They were not, I assure you, yet——”

“ What means that, yet ?—Do not sport with a
“ mother’s sorrow.”

“ I do not, Madam ; I honour, respect and pity
“ you.”

“ Then explain yourself.”

“ Might I not have been imposed on myself ?”

“ Young man,” said she, looking sternly at him,
“ I have had too good an opinion of you to suppose
“ you mean and base enough to jest with misery.
“ Let the agonies of an afflicted parent, let the elo-
“ quent tears of that unhappy sister prevail on you
“ to clear up this mysterious behaviour of yours.”

“ I will not forfeit your good opinion, I assure you,
“ Madam ; nor shall my behaviour or language be
“ mysterious. In a little time I hope to explain my-
“ self to your satisfaction, to y^{our} comforts.”

“ And can you be so barbarous to withhold that
“ comfort from distress !—How can you be so cru-
“ el !”

“ It would be cruelty to have imparted it to you,

“ Excess

“ Excess of joy has frequently worse effects than excess of sorrow.”

“ Where would your deceitful words lead me ?
 “ What strange hopes have you given rise to in my
 “ breast !—What am I to think ?—Perhaps— but ’tis
 “ madness and frenzy to indulge the thought—Is not
 “ my unhappy boy numbered with the dead ? does he
 “ not moulder in ashes ?”

Rigby remained silent : greatly was he affected with her distress, yet more did he fear to inform her of the truth of the matter.

“ Why will you not speak ?—Would you have me
 “ think that poor child yet lives ? Is it so ?” said she,
 falling on her knees before him : “ pity a mother’s
 “ transports, and satisfy her doubts.”

“ Oh, my good Lady,” said he, raising her up, compose yourself, much happiness and joy await you.”

“ Say, does he yet live !”

“ He does.”

“ Thanks, thanks to thee, thou God of mercy.
 “ But may I believe you ?

“ You may : he is alive and well restored to his
 “ reason and himself.”

“ It is too much—too much. But perhaps you
 “ may be imposed upon again.”

“ It is impossible ; I have conversed with him
 “ within these three days.”

“ Yet I doubt, and yet I fear.—Sure if he was alive,
 “ he would send me some testimonial of it.”

“ He has : I have a letter for you”

He produced it. She snatch’d it eagerly out of his hands, and broke the seal. “ It is his hand writing ; it is his indeed !” She read thus :

“ Before my friend delivers this to the best of mothers,
 “ she will be informed that her son yet lives
 “ —lives to dry up those tears which she and his
 “ dear sister shed upon his account ; to cheer her
 “ declining years, and be the comfort and happiness
 “ of

“ of her age. I have escaped the jaws of death by
“ the singular mercy of God, and am once more re-
“ stored to my reason. In a few days I shall receive
“ your blessing.—I long to embrace you and my
“ poor sister. Till then, and ever, believe me your
“ dutious, and truly affectionate.

“ RICHARD HILLASTON.”

Miss Hillaston took this from her mother, to be assured of the truth of it, as well as her eyes, dimmed with tears, would permit her to read it.—

“ This is happiness indeed!—I can scarcely support
“ it. I must entreat your pardon, Mr. Rigby, but I
“ must go to my closet, and pour out my grateful
“ heart in thanksgivings to the author of my happi-
“ ness—it will compose me.”

She retired. In the mean time her daughter remained with Rigby, of whom she asked ten thousand questions; all of which he satisfied her, and prepared her for the sight of her brother. In about half an hour Mrs. Hillaston returned; she was more tranquil, but still overjoyed. She embraced Rigby, and called him her child. You shall be ever as one to me. They spent the remainder of the evening with great happiness, and Rigby retired early to bed. In the morning Mrs. Hillaston apologized to him for neglecting to give him the letter last night which she then put in his hands; but her transports were so great that they drove every other consideration out of her head. There was no occasion, he said, to make any excuse—“ It came from Mrs. Leeson, I believe,
“ and has been here but a day.” He turned pale at that intelligence; but broke it open, and found a letter from his mother, conceived in these terms:

“ When I saw you last, my dear child, my agita-
“ tions were so great that I had not recollection e-
“ nough to inform you of what may materially con-
“ cern your interest. You have an aunt of your fa-
“ ther’s

“ther’s, who lives at D——, in Warwickshire; she
 “is possessed of a large fortune, and you are the
 “nearest relation she has in the world. Your hap-
 “less father ere he died, was reconciled to her, and
 “she promised to make him her heir. The inclosed
 “letter will introduce you to her. She must now
 “be greatly advanced in years, therefore I would
 “have you be as expeditious as possible in this appli-
 “cation to her. Your look will prove that her
 “Kinsley was your father. If, when you return,
 “you go to Mrs. K——, a milliner at Bury, you will
 “meet your sister there. If I can come and take a
 “last embrace, I will, for I shall be very anxious to
 “know the success of your journey. Farewell, my
 “dear boy, and be assured I am your affectionate,
 “and unhappy mother.

“M. L.”

The inclosed letter to Mrs. Parkington, contained little more than a recapitulation of those facts which the reader is already acquainted with, recommending the bearer, as her nephew, to her notice.

When he read these, he began to consider how he could reconcile this command of his mother’s, and the desire he had to see her once more, with the promise he had made to Lydia. But he thought he might be able both to go and see his aunt, and return within the limited time, to Berkshire. Besides, the consideration of having an equivalent fortune to his Lydia’s, that she might not take a beggar to her arms, determined him, more especially, to try how Mrs. Parkinton would receive him. His heart swelled with conscious pride at the thought of being something like a match for her in point of wealth. With that view he resolved to set forward in the afternoon. He did not inform Mrs. Hillaston particularly where he was going, or on what business, lest he might be disappointed, but promised to return to them in a week; and having told them on that day they might expect his

his friend, set off for Warwickshire. He performed his journey with expedition, and arrived at the town where she lived about noon. Her habitation was well known: and when he had cleaned and refreshed himself, he went to see her. He was introduced to her, and having demanded his business, he delivered the letter to her, which she took out her spectacles to read, desiring him to sit down very cordially. As she perused the letter, he had an opportunity of examining her person. She was seated in her arm-chair, and was rather corpulent; her infirmities, for she was then near eighty, having prevented her rising to receive him when he came in. Her hair was white as silver; her countenance was yet ruddy, and she appeared fresh and healthy: the effects of temperance and regularity.—“This letter, Sir,” said she, informs me you are my nephew. “Come here, and sit near me, that I may look at you.” He obeyed her instantly.

“Till within these few days, Madam, I never knew that I had such a relation so near and so venerable, or I should have paid my respects to you before now, and assured you of my affection.”

She looked at him very attentively, for some time, without speaking.

“I believe,” said she at last, “that you must be my nephew indeed. You have your father’s face, nay, his voice. I remember well, very well, when the poor young man came to me, before he was married to your mother—and I remember Doctor Wakefield too very well—he was a very worthy man. But I never knew that my nephew was married to his daughter.—And how came you to be called Rigby?”

He explained these matters as well as he could, and the old Lady seemed very well pleased with him. She made him stay with her, and every hour the likeness of his father was more visible in him. The many tokens

tokens of respect and affection that he shewed to her gave her a great deal of satisfaction. Nor was this regard feigned or hypocritical. He had naturally a great veneration for age. It inspired him with awe and respect: the reflection of the pleasure he should receive himself from the attention that younger people should pay him when advanced in years, influenced his conduct, and regulated his behaviour. His good-nature was not offended at the length or number of the stories she told him concerning the family: he listened to them attentively and patiently, and even solicited her to repeat some of them. The next morning he found the old Lady up as soon as he was; and when he talked of returning, she insisted on his staying a week with her. This he told her, though happy as he should be in her company, could not be complied with at that time, but he would soon pay her another visit. In the course of their conversation she told him he must change his name to Kingsley, which he promised to do. As he determined to quit her early the next morning, she took her leave of him very affectionately over night, and gave him a large seal ring which had been a long time in the family, and which she regarded very much. He was obliged to promise to return to her soon again—and they parted. His design was to proceed to Bury, in hopes to see his mother. He had already reached the borders of Suffolk, and was pleasing himself with the expectation of meeting his good friends, and returning in the proper time to Lydia: for he had written twice to her, and assured her how anxious he was to be with her again. He was in a road that he knew nothing of, and was in a strange country. As he doubted which way to go, an elderly gentleman overtook him, of whom he enquired his road to Bury. The other very courteously replied that he was going part of the way himself, and would direct him properly. Rigby thanked him, and they rode on in an

an easy pace together for a mile or better. They both seemed very well pleased with each other ; the old gentleman with his companion's modesty and good sense ; and his jocularity and facetiousness was as agreeable to Rigby, whom he invited home with him where he was then going, but which he excused himself from, saying he was in haste to meet a friend at Bury, but expressed many obligations to him for his civility. They were almost at the road where Rigby was to part from him, when passing by a narrow lane, three fellows, armed with cutlasses and bludgeons, on foot, rushed out, and one of them seized the old gentleman's horse by the bridle, and made a stroke at him. Rigby saw his danger, and received it upon a stout whip which he had in his hand, and with which he immediately knocked the assailant down. Instantly he found himself receive a heavy blow on the shoulder, which, however, did not prevent him from drawing his pistol from the holsters, which he fired at one of them without success. He had not time to take the other out before he got a blow on the side of the head with a stick, which brought him to the ground : and now would the ruffians have executed their bloody purposes, if they had not been prevented by the appearance of three travellers, whom the report of the pistol had alarmed, making up to them as fast as they could. The two villains ran up the lane ; and the third lay still on the earth, stunned with the blows he had received. Near him was extended Rigby, in a much worse condition ; for he had received a deep cut in the shoulder with a cutlass, and a contusion in his head, with the fall he had from his horse. The people who came up to them, and enquired what was the matter, were soon informed by the gentleman, who knew one of them. They seized and secured the robber, and then assisted Rigby to mount his horse, which he was hardly able to sit. One was dispatched for a surgeon, while

while the others helped to support him till he got to the gentleman's house, which was but a short way off. But as soon as he was taken down, he fainted away with loss of blood, and was carried senseless into the house.

This affair naturally created a great alarm, and the gentleman's wife came to see what was the matter. To prevent her being shocked, he told her in general and short terms how the affair happened.

"Generous young man," said she, "let me go and try to assist him; perhaps I may be of some service to him."

She went to the couch on which he was laid: but judge if thou canst, reader, of the agony that seized the heart of Mrs. Leeson, for it was Mrs. Leeson herself, when she beheld her beloved son, lying pale, bloody and speechless before her! Excess of horror tied up her tongue, and restrained her steps, but it was only for a moment.

"O good God," exclaimed she, clapping her hands together, "why do I live to see this hour! Oh my son, my son," added she throwing herself on the bleeding youth—"yet open thine eyes—live but for a moment, that I may bless you."

Her cries roused him to life.

"Where am I?" said he in a faint voice.

"In your mother's arms, never to be separated from her"

At that moment the surgeon arrived, and began to examine his patient. Maria had followed her mother, and no sooner had she seen Rigby in that condition, than she fainted away. Mr. Leeson was in a state of astonishment; he knew not what to do, or what to think. He neither attended to his wife, his child, or to the stranger who had been wounded in his defence, and by whose means he escaped unhurt. The surgeon drew him from this reverie, by desiring that the sick man might be put to bed, and kept extremely

tremely quiet, for he could not think him out of danger. Mr. Leeson's generosity and humanity returned; and he saw these orders executed himself, and that every proper care was taken of him. The past scene then recurred to his mind, and the more he thought of it, the more inexplicable it was to him. He returned to the parlour, where Maria, though dissolved in tears herself, was endeavouring to comfort her afflicted mother. He eyed them with a look of anger and seated himself in a sullen silence. At length he spoke, and addressed himself to his wife.

"It is t^y you, madam, I must apply for an explanation of this extraordinary scene: what am I to understand by it?"

He paused, and the weeping matron could not speak.

"Why do you not answer me? And when you do, be careful that you do not trifle. You call this young man your son; the agonies the sight of him, in that dreadful condition, threw you into are a sufficient proof of that assertion. You came as a maiden to my arms: my unsuspecting credulity received you as such; as such I have honoured and esteemed you. Am I to find in this evening hour of my life, that I have spent my days with a wanton? Dreadful thought! The stain will lie upon you, my poor children, and on me.—What shall I do!"

"I needed not these injurious calumnies, Mr. Leeson, to aggravate my distress; but they are equally false and vain. The character I have supported as your wife for so many years might have saved me, I think, from this imputation, and established my fame: but though I am not guilty, I may be culpable."

As she spoke she rose. and went out of the room. Leeson was now more disturbed than ever. This was a confession that, he thought, no woman could be

be induced to make. As Maria was following her mother, he called her back.—“What is the meaning of all this? Do you know any thing of your mother’s behaviour?”

“Nothing, Sir,” said she trembling at the sternness with which he addressed her, “but what would do honour to any woman.”

“Have you both conspired to deceive me? Do you know any thing of this son of hers? Did you ever see him before?”

“I have, Sir, but—”

“But what? Speak! or be dumb for ever.”

“I cannot, indeed, papa, without my mother’s permission.”

“Ungracious girl! Do you also join in my dishonour? Hence from my presence, nor see my face till you know your duty to me.”

She retired, weeping. He walked about the room with hasty steps, labouring under the greatest agitations —“I will go to her, I am resolved,” said he, “and force the secret of my infamy from her. Yet no tongue, however malicious, has been able to impeach her fame since she has been my wife. With a careful eye I watched her paths; nor did she, as I have the greatest reason to believe, ever turn aside from the road of virtue. But strange suspicions arise. She would not listen to my addresses for a long time. She had another lover too before me. He, I suppose enjoyed those charms which I so foolishly thought were reserved for me. This is horrid! and I have lived a wittol, a dupe, imposed upon by the stalest artifices; whilst disgrace and shame must ever attend me, and my family. It is not to be borne! I will make the traitress inform me of her own iniquity. She has even estranged the affections of my daughter from me, I will know the worst instantly; and be no longer doubtful of my misfortune.”

He

He went to search for her ; she was not in her own apartment : he looked in others, and at last turned his steps towards Rigby's room. He entered gently, lest he should disturb him ; and there he saw his wife sitting by the side of the bed, gazing attentively on the youth, who was fallen into a slumber. By her side sat Maria, the picture of grief ; for her mother's affliction and her father's anger had greatly affected her.

This scene struck him forcibly. He loved his wife, and that love made him careful of her : but he could not see her thus weeping over the fruit of another man's love, without feeling a degree of rage, hardly tolerable ; yet his gratitude for the person who had delivered him from the hand of assassins, and had suffered so much by the generous action, restrained his fury, and he stifled his resentment for the present. He contented himself with beckoning to Maria, and asking her what was the young man's name ? to which, she replied " Rigby." And he turned upon his heel, and went out again as silently as he entered. " Rigby, Rigby," said he, as he walked towards the garden : " that is not the name that I heard mentioned as her lover. That was Kingsley, if I recollect aright — then she has had variety. I shall go distracted."

His hapless wife yet suffered more than he did. The consequences of discovering her son, in the agony of her heart, were present to her imagination. She knew Mr. Leeson's jealous temper ; and her own meanness in concealing the truth of her situation from him, when she married him, struck her most forcibly at that instant. She foresaw that all her happiness with him was at an end, and their future life, if they should remain together, would be a continual scene of misery. On his part, eternal reproaches and upbraidings, would every hour remind her of her faults.

These

These reflections suggested themselves to her very often, since she met her son at Mrs. Hillaston's. The fear of a discovery, her conscious shame, and her dread of her husband, preyed on her mind, and prejudiced her health. This last interview laid the axe to the root. She at that instant had her son, whom she so tenderly loved, before her eyes, removed but one step from death. This, added to the conflicts she had before endured, were more than her nature could support. As her eyes gazed on her wounded child, a mist was gathered over them, a thick film obscured her sight; her thickening blood throbbed tumultuously in her tumid veins; her brain boiled in its cells.

"Maria," said she, "lead me to my chamber—
"Oh, my head, my head! I shall soon cease to be
"tormented, my woes will soon be at an end."

Maria, terrified at her mother's words, obeyed in silence, and found that she had spoken but too truly. Assistance was immediately called, and she was put to bed in a very distempered state. Mr. Leeson was informed of this, and went to see her; but he found her so ill, that he was really alarmed for her safety, and immediately sent for physicians and proper help. His affections returned at the sight of her danger, and he no more remembered his suspicions. He even reproached himself, as the cause of her disorder, by treating her so harshly. This self-condemnation was increased, when, in her delirium, for she lost her senses that night, she entreated to be screened from her husband. He was now truly wretched.

In five days, Rigby recovered himself surprisingly, and was able to leave his bed. But his mind was by no means in as good a state as his body; his absence from Lydia, and the uneasiness she would feel at his protracted stay; his own desire to be with her, and the present impossibility of gratifying that desire,
gave

gave him more torment than his corporeal sufferings. He thought of sending for Hillaſton ; but his hopes of being in another three days able to go home in a carriage, prevented him. This trouble was augmented by the converſation he had that day with Mr. Leeſon.

“ I give you joy, Sir,” ſaid he, as he came into the room, “ of the good news which your ſurgeon has informed me of. There are now no doubts of your recovery, provided you take a little care.”

“ That which your goodneſs has taken of me, renders me cautious.”

“ Oh, ſay nothing of that : am not I indebted to you for my life ? for I learn by the fellow whom we took, that there was a deſign to murder me ; and can I be too grateful to him, who has been the means of my preſervation ? ſay no more, Sir, on that head, for I ſhall never be able to return the obligation.”

“ You over-rate my ſervices, Sir. An action that ſprung merely from humanity, deſerves not theſe particular acknowledgments. But ſhall I beg to know to whom I have been happy enough to render his ſervice ?”

“ My name is Leeſon. Sir.”

“ Leeſon !” ſaid he, ſtarting ; “ I was informed otherwiſe.”

“ You are right, ſir ; you were ſo. But it was by deſire of the ſurgeon.”

“ And what myſtery was couched under that prohibition ?—Leeſon !”

“ You ſeem to know the name ”

“ I do—ſomething like a dream recurs to my diſturbed imagination, of having ſeen——”

“ Your mother.”

“ Ha ! where did you learn that ſecret ?”

“ From her diſtreſs at ſeeing you brought here, wounded and bloody.”

G

„ Good

“ Good Heaven ! and are you her husband ? ”

“ I am that unhappy man ! — ”

“ Why unhappy ? her virtue would render any man blessed. ”

He answered only with a deep sigh.

“ Forgive the impatience, and curiosity, Sir, which your behaviour excites. Why do you sigh ? cannot I be permitted to see my mother ? ”

“ I fear not at present. ”

“ Why, for Heaven’s sake ? ”

“ She is very ill. ”

Rigby stared wildly at him, but spoke not.

“ She is indeed very ill,” continued he, and would not know you if you were to see her. ”

“ Good God ! ” said Rigby, striking his breast, “ how long has she been thus ? ”

Mr. Leeson informed him, and answered every question he asked, with the greatest politeness ; telling him, that as now he was able to see company, that he would come with his permission, and mingle tears with him, and partake of his sorrow.

Soon after he quitted the room, Maria came to Rigby, and with a flood of tears, acquainted him with the particulars of her mother’s situation, of whose recovery the physicians gave no hopes. He could neither give to, or receive comfort from his weeping sister. He sat in a state of silent grief, almost insensible to every thing about him. He prevailed on her to let him see his mother, and she promised to comply with it ; but it only increased his affliction, to see her so much altered, and hear her ravings. Mr Leeson visited him frequently, as well as Maria, whenever she could spare time from her attendance on her mother. The former conceived a very great regard for him : so much did his modest and respectful behaviour win upon him, who had first, little less than an absolute aversion to him, considering him as the proof of his wife’s guilt.

In

In sorrow and lamentations did this afflicted family spend their time for three days. On the eighth of her illness, they received the pleasing account, that she slept well the preceding night, breathed easier, and seemed more composed than she had yet been, and her fever appeared to be a little abated.

This gave them all great joy ; and they put up their prayers to Heaven, to restore her to them once more. She remained for some hours in a slumber : so it was not known what effect her rest had upon her.

About ten, their pleasure was encreased, by hearing that she had recovered her senses, and knew every body. This circumstance re-inspired them with hopes ; and Mr. Leeson went to see her. In a few minutes he returned, and informed Rigby and Maria that their mother wanted to see them all together. They followed him into the room ; and Rigby, throwing himself on his knees at the bedside, pressed her hand to his trembling lips.

“ Blessed be the God that has restored me to my
“ senses, my dear child, that I may see you ere I die,
“ that I may give my blessing to you, that I may
“ charge thee to vindicate my name, when I am
“ no more. I feel myself going, life ebbs apace ;
“ my nature, exhausted by the violent attacks of this
“ dreadful disorder, makes this one effort to repel
“ its force : but I am so weak that I cannot hold
“ it long. This is that dreadful pause that pre-
“ cedes dissolution. In this hour, the soul, losing
“ every hope of being re-united to the body in this
“ world only looks forward to the next. In this
“ moment, can I pretend to utter the words of false-
“ hood or shall I rush into eternity, loaden with a
“ guilty, lye ? I look up to thee, my honoured, my
“ beloved yet injured husband, oppressed with con-
“ scious shame ; I look up to thee for pardona :
“ a foolish weakness prevented my informing you

“ before we were united, that I had been married
 “ to Mr. Kingsley, and fear prevented me after-
 “ wards ; but this deception has gone near to my
 “ heart, it has occasioned this illness. My life is
 “ the sacrifice of my crimes, and may it atone for
 “ them—I hold it criminal to have concealed any
 “ thing from so tender, so kind an husband : yet
 “ let me not descend to the grave, without thy
 “ pardon ; let not my last hour be marked with thy
 “ indignation. Never have I injured thee, in any
 “ other instance, since I became your wife ; and
 “ master of my affection, as you were of my person,
 “ my only study was to encrease your happiness.
 “ Let me not want thy forgiveness, to enable me
 “ to bear the approach of death with more forti-
 “ tude.”

Mr. Leeson was moved to an excess by this
 address. He attempted to speak ; sobs and groans
 stopped his utterance ; his tears flowed down his
 cheeks, and he stood torn by passions he could not
 give a vent to. Maria and Rigby were not less agi-
 tated ; the dying lady alone preserved an heroic
 composure. At length her husband found his speech :
 he threw himself on the bed by her, he pressed her
 to his throbbing heart in an extacy of grief—“ So
 “ may the Almighty forgive me in the day of judge-
 “ ment, so may his mercy spare me in the hour of
 “ his wrath, as I pardon and forgive thee, my best
 “ Maria, thou virtuous partner of my afflicted
 “ heart—But yet live ; live, that I may make thee
 “ ample amends for the injurious suspicions I en-
 “ tertained of you.

“ It must not be,” said she, straining him with a
 anguid embrace to her pale lips, “ I decay every
 “ moment ; yet my heart feels its exhausted strength
 “ a little renewed by thy kindness. I thank thee
 “ from my soul for all thy goodness to me, and more
 “ particularly this last mark of it : add to it by
 “ taking care of my other little ones, whom I have

“ not

“ not the happiness of seeing in these my last moments And you, my children, to whom I have related the history of my life, reveal it to my honoured lord ; he will respect the memory of her whom he loved.”

“ Say no more,” said he, sobbing : you distress me beyond utterance ; I am become a child a second time ; this unexampled tenderness overcomes me.”

“ Yet weep not for me ; we shall meet again. Maria, my beloved daughter, let thy mother’s fate be a warning to thee, never to quit the paths of truth. Let an ingenuous openness govern all thy actions: then shall not shame approach thee, or fear of detection embitter thy days: May the God of heaven bestow his peace upon thee, and grant thee happiness. Embrace me, my children : I have no wish to live but for your sakes. Farewell, my dearest son : think of me sometimes.— Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” was scarce audible : she fell back in the arms of her son, and expired without a groan.

The attention of the wretched husband and afflicted son were turned to Maria, who fell lifeless by her mother’s side. They removed her into another apartment, and with some difficulty, recalled her to life,

After the funeral of the dear deceased had been decently performed, Rigby complied with his mother’s desire, and related the history of her life to Mr. Leeson, as it had been imparted to him. When he had finished this narrative, Mr. Leeson joined afresh with him in lamenting his mother, whom he now respected more than ever. He assured him that he shared his regard and affection with his own children, giving him, at the same time, very lively marks of his esteem.

Rigby

Rigby declared his intentions of departing from him the day after his mother's interment, as his business called him away, and he could not bear to stay in the house. As he was going to Hillaſton's, he asked leave to take Maria with him, as change of place might diſſipate her grief, which, it was feared, would affect her too much. Maria was perſuaded to accompany her brother, and the next day they ſet out together.



B O O K XII.

THE ſudden appearance of Rigby at Mrs. Hillaſton's, accompanied by Maria, occaſioned great ſurprize, not on account of his return, for they expected him daily, and were uneaſy at his long ſtay; but to ſee him come muffled up, ſo much changed, ſo pale and dejected, and with Miſs Leeſon, in whoſe face they could delineate ſorrow, cauſed univerſal conſternation. Hillaſton happened to be at home when their chaiſe ſtop'd in the yard. He was firſt to hand them out: but he drew back with aſtoniſhment, when he beheld his friend's countenance.

“ Good God ! Rigby, what ails you ? I am ſorry to ſee you thus ”

“ Ah, Hillaſton, I am bad enough indeed.”

They aſſiſted Maria, who was received with great friendſhip by the ladies ; and Rigby, in the mean time informed Hillaſton of what had paſſed ſince he ſaw

saw him : who endeavoured to console his griefs, and sympathized with him. His mother testified great marks of affection for Rigby ; and the joy the family felt at the happy restoration of Hillaston, was damped by the sight of affliction that their visitors laboured under. Rigby could not forbear disclosing his uneasiness to Hillaston, at not having been able to return to Berkshire within the limited time.—“ But to-morrow,” said he “ I will go ; my poor Lydia thinks I have forsaken her. I am very unhappy about her, as I have had no answers to my letters. The reluctance she expressed at parting with me comes fresh into my remembrance, and I begin to think something unfortunate attends me : I know not what it is, but I have very unusual fears.”

His friend wished to disengage him from such thoughts, which he told him, were only the consequences of his weakness. and the extraordinary agitations he had lately undergone. He also promised to go along with him. This was very pleasing to him, and every thing was prepared for their departure the next morning : but a fever seized Rigby in the night, and he was so very ill the next day, that there was no possibility of his stirring. The whole family were interested in his welfare : and their care and attention to him shewed the earnestness of their wishes for his recovery. It was ten days before his disorder left him : and it was not judged prudent for him to venture on a journey for a week after he was able to walk about. This gave him great uneasiness ; for he was very anxious to return to Berkshire. And what encreased his anxiety was, that there was no answer made to his letter which he wrote to Miss Bennet, informing her of the cause of this delay, and where he was. This state of uncertainty was intolerable : and, in spite of every remonstrance to the contrary, he set out, though far from being re-

established in health. accompanied by his friend. They arrived without any accident at Wilkins's: and the journey seemed to have been of service to Rigby, who mended greatly as he approached the place where he supposed Lydia was.

The length of time he had been absent had so far exceeded his intended return, that the farmer's family were all uneasy about him, and were glad to see him come back though so ill. He failed not to ask, the moment of his arrival, if they had heard any thing of Mrs. Wilcox, or Miss Bennet. Mrs. Wilkins quitted the room: the farmer looked wistfully at him, shook his head, and remained silent.

"Why do not you speak?" said he—"that silence prognosticates something dreadful. I have just seen my mother die, and am acquainted with woe. I can bear misfortune: let me know the worst that attends me."

"Indeed, Mr. Rigby you should be prepared."

"I suppose," said he hastily, "she is dead too. Is it so?"

"It is but too true."

"Thy will be done—I submit. But I should be formed of other materials, to endure this weight of affliction. Surely I cannot support it."

He left the room abruptly, and retiring to his own chamber, threw himself on the bed in a fit of despair. Words cannot paint his distress, or the agonies he at that moment experienced. Hillaston feared that this news would make him relapse, and acquainted Wilkins with every thing that had happened.

When the first transports of the afflicted Rigby's grief were a little abated, Hillaston went up to him. He found him insensible to every thing but the thoughts of his beloved Lydia.

"Misery is our lot in a greater or lesser degree," said Hillaston: "it is dealt out to us in larger or smaller

“ smaller portions ; thine is heavy to bear, and
 “ requires the more fortitude. I confess you have
 “ reason to grieve. I lament her loss, for she was
 “ worthy to be lamented.”

“ She was, indeed. Ah, Hillaſton, you knew
 “ not the virtues of her ſoul, her purity, her fond-
 “ neſs. Her perſon was not more lovely, and it
 “ was truly ſo, than her mind was charming. Where
 “ ever ſhall I find ſuch perfections joined in one
 “ woman again ? Is not my fate very hard ? Scarce-
 “ ly had I won her to my wiſh, and began to form
 “ plans of happineſs with her in future life, than
 “ ſhe is ſnatched away from me ; and I am left
 “ miſerable, and excluded from every comfort.
 “ Never ſhall my heart know love more ; never
 “ ſhall my boſom harbour affection for any other
 “ woman. Hear this reſolution, thou pure ſaint,
 “ whoſe gentle ſpirit, perhaps at this moment, ho-
 “ vers over thy afflicted lover, and ſees with ſatis-
 “ faction the grief that thy loſs has occaſioned, and
 “ hears with pleaſure the vow he now makes. Short
 “ will be my days, and ſoon ſhall I follow thee to
 “ the cold grave.”

Hillaſton was pierced to the heart at his friend's diſtreſs : every argument he could uſe was unavail- ing, and he reſuſed to be comforted. He rejeſted all manner of ſuſtenance for that day, nor would he leave his room. The only amuſement he coveted was to have an undiſturbed indulgence to reflect on his Lydia, to weep over her loſs, and lament his own miſery. The ſecond day he perſevered in his reſolution. Hillaſton entreated him to come down among the family, and take ſome nourishment.

“ I have no occaſion for food,” ſaid he : “ I
 “ am full : my woe leaves no room for any thing
 “ elſe : I drink from the bitter cup of adverſity,
 “ and ſo row is my companion. Leave me to my-
 “ ſelf, Hillaſton.”

"That I will not do. From being afflicted myself, I become the comforter : and shall I refuse to administer the same consolation to you which you so kindly afforded to me ?"

He undertook to combat all his arguments, and with much difficulty, he prevailed on him to go down stairs with him. However, he would not stay long with them, but gave loose in solitude to his grief, which preyed on his heart, and almost shook his reason from her seat. While he thus indulged his unavailing sorrow, Hillaston felt the esteem he ever had for Hannah Wilkins soften into a tenderer passion. He beheld her with more pleasure than formerly : he sought her company, and was uneasy at her absence. Though he was not unacquainted with her humanity, and the tenderness of her disposition, it encreased his good opinion of her when he beheld the concern she expressed, and really felt, for Rigby's grief, and the occasion of it. He had hinted in his parting with her, that he had something material to communicate to her : now was the time. He began to find that she was essentially necessary to his happiness, and wished to learn how she stood affected to him. He seized the first opportunity that offered when she was alone, and they had a probability of enjoying their conversation undisturbed.

"Poor Mr. Rigby," said she, "how sorry am I for him ! He is a constant lover indeed."

"He is so, and I sincerely pity his situation ; but I think it is preferable to that of him who loves without return."

That was touching to Hannah : she felt the force of it, her blood mounted into her cheeks.

"My dear Hannah," continued he, "I told you when last I saw you, that I had something particular to say to you : I hope it will not be disagreeable to you."

Poor

Poor Hannah's uneasiness began to encrease; she durst not look at him, or speak; her confusion was very visible.

"It is a circumstance I assure you, that my future happiness in a great measure depends upon. I love you, Hannah! your many good qualities have created a strong and lasting passion in my heart; I hope to inspire you with the same: my affection is honourable, and I wish to sanctify it by the most holy and binding ties. I am a stranger to compliments or falsehood: if you will unite your fate to mine, I will endeavour to make your life pass as happily as I can."

He paused, but the trembling Hannah could not answer him.

"My dearest girl," said he, "I speak with the greatest truth and sincerity; I long esteemed you; even in the hours of my frenzy I regarded you. It is not difficult to change friendship into love: that I have experienced. Tell me then, Hannah, whether I am disagreeable to you, or whether your heart is engaged to any other person: in either case I will desist from teizing you with my addresses. Speak then, as well for my sake as your own."

"How can I speak, sir?" said she, with a faltering voice. "What can I say to you? Or how shall I believe that a gentleman of family, of fortune, and your situation in life, can think seriously of a poor farmer's daughter, without fortune, or any other recommendation than her honesty?"

"I have told you nothing my lovely girl," replied he, taking her tumulous hand in his, "than you may not believe. The most ungenerous thing a man can do, is to endeavour to prepossess a woman with an opinion that he is fond of her, with an intention to deceive her. Such proceedings

“ dings my heart is a stranger to, and my tongue
 “ does not belie it. I have offered the most con-
 “ vincing proof of my affection : consent to become
 “ my wife : I want no fortune ; and it is more
 “ pleasure for me to bestow it upon you, than to re-
 “ ceive it at your hands. I have no conceptions of
 “ your father’s making objections : it only remains
 “ then with you, my charming girl, to reward my
 “ passion, and crown it with joy, by bestowing your
 “ hand on me, by believing my truth, my sincerity,
 “ and my love.”

“ Oh ! we are but too apt to believe what we
 “ wish.”

“ And am I so happy,” said he, clasping the un-
 reluctant maid to his bosom, as to find it your wish.
 “ My lovely Hannah, from this hour I will make it
 “ my study to repay your kindness, your openness and
 “ generosity, in letting me know my fate at once,
 “ and not keeping me in suspense and torment.”

Her reply was dictated by modesty and good sense,
 which still rendered her more dear to him. He pro-
 duced the written fragment he had found, and asked
 her if it was her hand. She confessed it was, with a
 blush, and requested of him to return it.

“ No,” said he, “ I will preserve it whilst I live ;
 “ this shall be the testimonial of your regard for
 “ me : this shall be my remembrance that my dear-
 “ est Hannah thought well of me, even when I was
 “ not myself : and I have no greater reason to thank
 “ heaven for the restoration of my senses, than as it
 “ has given me an opportunity of repaying, in some
 “ measure, your kindness and compassion to me.”

Hannah, though she could have listened to him
from morn till dewy eve, a summer’s day, yet was glad
 when they were interrupted. Her heart was over-
 charged, and she longed to give it vent. Her tears,
 which fell plentifully in private, calmed her trans-
 ports, and moderated her joy, which was excessive.

Rigby,

Rigby, though his grief was not at all abated, yet in compliance to the desire of his friend, once more mixed with the family. He asked the farmer if he knew where Miss Bennet was buried; who replied, he had heard that she died in London, but where she was interred he knew not.

“No doubt Mrs. Wilcox can inform you,” said Hillaston; “and I think you should go and see her.”

“It is my intention,” replied he: “but how shall I support an interview with her? How shall I again behold those places where I have been so happy with Lydia? It will be death to me; nevertheless I will go to her.”

The next day he put this resolution in practice; but every step he took towards the spot where he had been blessed with Lydia, increased his sorrow. His eyes poured forth tears, his bursting heart was swollen with woe: he at last reached Mrs. Wilcox's house. The appearance of Rigby surprized the servant that opened the door. On his enquiring for her mistress, he was informed that she had just recovered from her lying-in, and was but indifferent. He sent her up, to notify his being there; and Mrs. Wilcox desired him to walk up. He obeyed, and found her very weak and ill. When she saw him she could not speak, but burst into tears. Rigby's eyes overflowed sympathetically.

“I should apologize to you, Mr. Rigby, for bringing you in to a sick chamber.”

“I am very sorry for the occasion of it, madam. May you live long and happily; but your poor cousin—she is no more.”

“Alas, Sir,” said she, “I fear it is but too true. I thought the news would have killed me, it was so sudden and shocking. I have not recovered it yet, and I fear never shall; the dear, the worthy girl!”

“Pray,

“ Pray, madam,” said Rigby, “ where did she die, and of what disorder, and where was she buried ?”

“ These are particulars I can hardly inform you of, with any certainty. Soon after you went away Mr. Wilcox came down in a great hurry, and told Lydia, that her affairs required her immediate presence in London as there were some large sums of money in a person’s hands, who was going to fail, as it was apprehended, and that it was absolutely necessary she should go up to London, with him, and that they must depart the next morning. She seemed very unwilling to go, but was at last prevailed upon, and went away. I was then very big with child, and expected every moment to cry out, or else I should have accompanied her. They were away above a month, before I heard any thing of them: and what gave me great uneasiness, was, that Lydia never wrote to me. Mr. Wilcox came home without her; my month had not then expired. I enquired after the dear girl. His answers alarmed and inflamed my curiosity.

“ What is the reason that Lydia did not return with you ?” said I.

“ She is dead and buried,” replied he.

“ I fainted away, and he left the room before I had recovered my senses. I saw him again only when he came to take leave of me. I enquired of what disorder she had died. He told me of a fever, which she got coming out of the play-house, and was buried in London.

“ This is all the satisfaction I have been able to get from him about it. I have not seen him since he came down to take possession of the estate, upon her death.”

These last words struck Rigby very forcibly; the conversation he had with Lydia recurred to his remembrance, and the prophetic tears which the lovely girl

girl expressed at his going away, all conspired to make him think there was something more extraordinary in her sudden decease, than he could fathom at once. He paused,—the more he considered, the greater reason he had to suppose that Wilcox, with the hope of inheriting her estate, had accelerated her death. He resolved from that moment, to be satisfied in the truth of the whole transaction.

“It is odd, madam,” said he, “that she should be buried in so private a manner, and so secretly: I think she should have been brought down here and deposited by her father.”

“Indeed I think so too, Mr. Rigby: but Mr. Wilcox does every thing as he pleases, and is so seldom at home with me, that I fear I have lost his affection entirely. Indeed I once did imagine he loved me, but I have ceased to think so lately. His treatment makes me very unhappy.”

Rigby said every thing he could upon such an occasion, and joined with her in lamenting her husband's behaviour. In this conversation, which lasted a good while, he endeavoured to learn every particular concerning the time of her death, as far as Mrs. Wilcox knew. She satisfied him as well as she could. He left her with assurances of regard for her, added that he would sometimes come and mingle his tears with her's, for the loss they had mutually sustained. As he went home he employed himself in recollecting the passages which gave rise to those suspicions he entertained of Wilcox; and, after some little debate in his own breast, laid it down for a certain truth, that she had been made away with for the sake of her fortune. This being established, he determined to search into the bottom of this affair, and if it was so, to bring him to punishment.

Occupied with these thoughts, the desire of vengeance took place of grief for a short time. He hastened home to communicate his notions to Hillaston,

ton, who, during his absence, had been employed in his own affairs. Wilkins walked towards his fields accompanied by Hillafton, who took an opportunity of talking to him concerning the marriage, and settlement of his family. The farmer expressed his desire of having them well settled, and especially Hannah. "The poor girl," said he, has been very ill "for some time past, and we cannot find out what "is the matter; a good husband would be the best "remedy, I believe for her; but she is a very good "girl, though I say it, who am her father."

"I see no reason why you should be debarred "from praising your own child when she deserves it. "Indeed, farmer, I think your daughter a very worthy, good girl and would make an excellent wife. "And I have a young fellow in my eye, that I can "venture to recommend to her, with your consent."

"Why I believe, Mr. Hillafton, from what you "have already done for the girl, that you wish her "very well, and have a great friendship for her. "And one might take a man that you would recommend. But I should be glad to know who it "is."

"What do you think of me for a son-in-law?"

"Ah," replied Wilkins, smiling, "now you jeer "me."

"Not I in truth," answered Hillafton; I am as "much in earnest as ever I was in my life, and as "serious."

"You will pardon me if I can hardly believe you, "Sir; for I cannot think you would marry a girl "who has neither fortune or family to boast of and "who is so much beneath you in life; and I hope "you do not, nay, I am sure you cannot mean any "thing else than honourably by her."

"I assure you I do not; and my sole intention is "to make her my wife, if you have no objection. "As

“ As for her consent, I am pretty secure of that. I
“ love your daughter ; Mr. Wilkins ; she is not a-
“ verse, and I thought it necessary to consult you a-
“ bout it.”

“ Sir,” said the farmer, “ for my part I receive
“ your proposal with joy, and am sensible of the ho-
“ nour, you intend both me and my daughter ; and
“ I hope her conduct will ever be such, as will give
“ you no occasion to repent your raising her from
“ this humble station.”

Hillaston replied, he was sure it would not, and
desiring him to communicate the matter to his wife,
left him, to return to Hannah, whom he supposed
to be uneasy to know the result of this application to
her father, which he had told her it was his design to
make.

She was extremely happy in his approbation, and
lover began to talk of fixing the time of their union.

Rigby returned home, and Hillaston perceived the
glow of anger on his cheek. He had scarcely pati-
ence to finish his dinner, or rather wait the finishing
their meal, for he eat very little himself, before he
called his friend out, and informed him of the suspi-
cions he had conceived, and the grounds and causes
of them, at the same time acquainting him with his
intention of proceeding to London, to investigate
this matter. Hillaston owned that the doubts he en-
tertained, were not void of probability.

“ Ah, Hillaston,” said Rigby, “ that journey to
“ Cambridgeshire has ruin’d me. The dear girl par-
“ ted with me as if she knew we were never to meet
“ again. The melancholy and fatal accident that
“ beset me there, and which detained me so long—
“ all, all conspired to my destruction.—I shall never
“ know peace or happiness more !”

“ Fear not, Rigby, it will yet return to you.”

“ But I will find him out who has been the cause
“ of robbing me of it : and if he has been guilty,—
“ no

“no subterfuge, no evasion shall screen him from
“public justice, or my private revenge.”

“He merits punishment if he has done this. But
“in your trouble I trust it will be a satisfaction to
“you to know that I have a prospect of happiness
“far beyond my wishes.”

A look from Rigby expressed curiosity and surprise
mixed with pleasure.

Hillaston continued—“Yes, my friend, in the
“virtuous simplicity, in the unaffected tenderness of
“Hannah Wilkins, I shall find a repose and plea-
“sure hitherto unknown to me. She has met my
“passion, and her friends have consented to our u-
“nion.”

“I do rejoice, sincerely rejoice, at your happi-
“ness; convinced that Hannah’s fondness for you
“will ever be a source of delight. May you be
“blessed. May no foul accident intervene
“to interrupt your joy. I will set off for Lon-
“don to-morrow, and endeavour to find out Wilcox,
“and wrest the fatal secret from him, on which my
“peace depends. I will never cease to pursue that
“villain till my doubts are satisfied, and my suspici-
“ons cleared up.—Leave me to misery—I am not a
“companion for the happy.”

“I will not leave you, Rigby, I will be the asso-
“ciate of your toils; nor will I quit your side till
“peace is restored to your distracted bosom.”

“Make not such a resolution. Happiness awaits
“you—it courts your acceptance. Do not with a
“rude and ungentle hand spurn it from you. Short
“are our hours of pleasure, many and tedious are
“our days of woe. While you can enjoy the prof-
“fer’d blessing, and at the last have consolation to
“think that you are happy, while I am the sport of
“adverse fortune.”

“I can receive no happiness, Rigby, unless you be
“at rest. The friendship I have conceived for you
“will

“ will not suffer me to be easy while you are wretched. I declare to you that I will positively go along with you.”

Rigby endeavoured to make him alter that resolution, which he combated with every argument he was master of, but all in vain ; he still maintained it, and went to tell Hannah of his intended departure. 'Tis true, she regarded Rigby ; but she loved Hillaaston, and his account of thus going away so suddenly, gave her a great deal of uneasiness ; but she was obliged to submit, and the next morning the two friends set off together for London. Rigby had passed through the great city two or three times, and was an entire stranger to it, or its customs ; but the search he was now going to make, would be attended with much difficulty, and require a thorough knowledge of it. In every probable place to meet Wilcox did Rigby search, and continued it for a week without any sort of success. In the mean time it appeared to him very necessary to write to Mrs. Parkington, and inform her of his mother's death. The old lady's answer to this letter, was a desire that he would come and see her. This Hillaaston persuaded him to do, as he ought not to lose the ground he had already gained in her esteem, by any apparent neglect, when his interest was so much at stake. He promised, in the mean time, to remain in London, and still do every thing in his power to find out Wilcox, and relieve his mind from the doubts and suspicions he then entertained, which would not suffer him to rest. Rigby yielded to his friend's arguments, and set out for Warwickshire.

On his arrival at his aunt's, she was much pleased with his prompt obedience to her request, yet was nevertheless shocked at his melancholy, which she could not dissipate, and which she had not perceive when he had visited her before. The kind and affectionate manner in which she treated him, induced him to open his heart to her ; and he informed her

of the cause of that melancholy which she had noticed so much. The old lady was affected at the story, and sympathised with him. She was greatly pleased at the confidence he reposed in her, and she now liked him better than ever. He, on the other hand, could not help looking on her with respect, who so humanely lamented his situation, and pitied him so kindly. She insisted on his staying a week with her. Every place was equally indifferent to him, and he consented. On the fifth day the post had brought him the following letter:

THIS day, my dear Rigby, I have succeeded beyond my expectations in discovering Wilcox. Sauntering through Piccadilly, a chariot, of a particular make, caught my eye, but the face of the gentleman who was in it struck me more than the carriage. It passed rather swiftly by me; yet I nevertheless thought it was Wilcox's face I had seen, and I turned about and followed it. With him was a lady in a riding dress, but I could not take very exact notice of her. I pursued the chariot till it stopped at a handsome house in a genteel street, near one of the squares; and I could perceive, by the behaviour of the servants, that the gentleman in the chariot was the master of the house, and that it could be no other than Wilcox. When matters were a little composed, I knocked at the door, and asked who lived there.

"Mr. Ramsden, Sir."

"Is he in town?"

"Yes, Sir, he is but just come."

"I want to speak to him."

"He is not at home, Sir."

"Why, I saw him quit his chariot, and go in."

"Will you pretend to tell me he is abroad?"

"He is, indeed, Sir—he is really gone out."

I found, at this rate, that I should have no chance of enjoying an interview with him, which I was resolved

solved upon. I knew he was in the house, and see him I would. I therefore seized the fellow by the collar and began to drub him.—“ You dog,” said I, “ you should be taught to tell truth, and I will be thy schoolmaster.” He roar’d out murder, robbery, and thieves, with great vociferation. The house was alarmed. One of his fellow-servants came to his assistance, and I ripped up his heels without quitting my original hold, for to tell the truth, he made a charming noise. This event answered my expectation. All the family came running into the hall to enquire the cause of the uproar, and among the rest, Wilcox himself. “ Ha,” said I, letting the servant go, and approaching him, “ I thought I should be happy enough to see you at last.”

“ What is the meaning of this insolence ?” said he with a fierce air. “ Why have you assaulted my servants in my house ?”

“ Because they would not tell the truth ; they denied your being at home. I had seen you myself enter these doors but a few minutes before, and as had some earnest business with you, Sir, which I must settle with you now, as I cannot call again, I thought this would be the most likely method of getting access to you, and have succeeded to my wishes.”

“ You are mistaken, Sir, if you imagine this assurance will recommend you.—But what is your business with me ?”

“ I must deliver it in private.”

“ I know not whether I am safe with you alone.”

“ Fear nothing from me—let your servants take care if I should attempt to escape them, or offer any violence to you.”—He retired into an adjoining parlour with me. “ I am first, Sir, to congratulate you on succeeding so happily to your cousin’s estate ; and, in the next place, to know of
“ what

“ what disorder she died, and where she was buried.”

“ These questions can be very soon answered,” replied he : “ she died of a fever, occasioned by her catching cold coming out of the playhouse, and she is buried in St. John’s—Have you any thing more to demand ?”

“ Not at present—you shall see me again,” No more words passed, he turned upon his heel, and I left the house. I hastened to the place where I was directed, and there saw the melancholy register of her interment. I fear, my dear Rigby, that it is but too true. However, I would have you come up to town as soon as possible, that you may have an opportunity of seeing Wilcox, who will, no doubt, use every means of coming to an explanation with you. Thus much for my attention to your affairs. Now for a little of my own. You recollect that when I made my will, which was deposited in your hands I requested you to accept of three thousand pounds, as a mark of my regard for you, and a small compensation for the trouble you had been at upon my account. My recovery made the will void as to your immediately receiving that legacy : but as it was my intention to afford you some token of my friendship, I must now insist upon your accepting that sum from my hands. It will be sort of prejudice to my affairs, and it will be giving you an independance. I have got you now at a proper distance, and can communicate this resolution to you without fear of being contradicted or opposed, at least for a while. But this I can tell you before hand, that none of your delicate scruples, or generous arguments will have any weight with me, for I am determined to please myself in this matter. Farewell, Rigby ; and if you can, with any convenience, leave your aunt, hasten to town to thine,

sincerely,

RICHARD HILLASTON.

Rigby's

Rigby's heart was greatly agitated at the perusal of this letter. It glowed with resentment against Wilcox, and was melted with gratitude at Hillafton's generosity. His aunt observed his emotions, and desired to know the cause of them. He could not explain them better than by giving her the letter to read. She admired his friend's behaviour :—"But," said she, "I would not have you indebted to any body's bounty for an independance, my dear boy ; it shall be my care to secure you that, whether I live or die. Nevertheless, I am very glad to find you have so good a friend, but desire you may reject this offer ; for though his goodnature and regard may induce him to make you this present yet I had much rather be the founder of your future fortune myself."

She got up, and, with her maid's assistance, went to her own chamber, and soon returned again to her nephew.

"I am very sorry," said she, "for the loss you have sustained in Miss Bennet, and I would be the first to advise you to see whether there was any foul play used towards her : but as that may be expensive to you, and I would not have you trouble some to your friend, or dependant on him, take these notes : these two hundred pounds will last you for some time ; but I would have you spare no pains to find out whether there is really any truth in your suspicions. Stay with me to-day, and to-morrow set out for London."

Rigby returned her thanks, in the most grateful manner, for her goodness ; and she assured him, with great affection, that she regarded his interest as her own ; desiring him to write to her frequently, and inform her of his success. He travelled post to London, and arrived there the next night. He found his friend at home, and informed him of the reception he had met with from his aunt ; and concluded with

with assuring him he could not accept of his proffered kindness. Hillaſton told him it was in vain to remonſtrate concerning that matter, for he had reſolved upon it; and that only by his acceptance of it would he be induced to continue his friendſhip for him, which he would ſtifle for ever if he reſuſed. Rigby could not quarrel and break with him for having ſo great a regard to his intereſt, and at laſt he conſented but reſolved to keep this matter ſecret from his aunt, in whoſe good opinion the knowledge of this tranſaction might prejudice him: and reſolving alſo to take the firſt opportunity which might preſent itſelf of making him a ſuitable return.

When this important point was adjusted, they entered into a conſultation in what manner to proceed with regard to Wilcox, and ſettled a plan to be executed the next morning. They roſe very early, and Hillaſton conducted his friend to Wilcox's houſe; but, to their great ſurprize, it was all ſhut up and abandoned. They made enquiries at the neighbouring houſes concerning this extraordinary appearance, and they learned that Mr. Ramſen had decamped entirely, with his family, two days before that; and having left no marks whereby he could be traced, was not to be found. This was a greivous diſappointment to poor Rigby, who had promiſed himſelf great ſatisfaction and information from an interview with him.

“ My ſuſpicions are now more ſtrong than ever,” ſaid he: “ the villain ſhuns me. It is the pro-
 “ vince of guilt to be fearful: conſcious iniquity
 “ makes him fly me. Good heaven! ſhall not pu-
 “ niſhment attend him? Shall he not meet the re-
 “ ward of his crimes?”

From hence they proceeded to the church, and there found the register of the burial; and, by dint of enquiries, learned where the perſon there interred was brought from. They went to the houſe which
 the

the undertaker directed them to who had buried her, but they could not receive the information there they wanted; for the then inhabitants of the house had dwelt there only a fortnight, nor did they know who lived there before. All that could be gathered from their most diligent enquiries for a whole week, which they spent in making them, was, that this Lydia Bennet was a young lady, very handsome, and died after a few days illness: that she was buried by a very near relation, who would have a very good fortune by her death; and that there was a evry pompous funeral.

Tired and dissatisfied with these informations, which did not tend in the least to remove his suspicions, or resolve his doubts, but, on the contrary, encreased both, by the air of the mystery he perceived the whole matter to have been conducted with, sat down to consult with his friend what course to take. They concluded that Wilcox would be on his guard, if he supposed them to be in London, which they were sure he had not left as he could there more effectually secure himself from their enquiries, and remain concealed, than in any other place. To gather every information of his proceeding, he wrote to Wilkins, to know if he was in the country; and he was answered that he was not, nor had been there since he himself left it; nor did Mrs. Wilcox know any thing of him.

This distracted Rigby; and, among the many schemes that suggested themselves to the friends, they thought, by going abroad for a little while, and contriving to make their being out of the kingdom very public, it might draw him from his concealment, and enable them at last to catch him. This appeared very plausible, and they resolved to put it in execution: but Rigby again persuaded his friend to leave him, enjoy the happiness that was prepared for him, and

and let him wander by himself. A friendly contest ensued, in which Hillaſton prevailed, and they reſolved to ſet off for the Continent as ſoon as poſſible. They were ready in a few day; and making their deſign as public as they well could, proceeded to Dover; and as it was equally indifferent to them to what part of the world they went, embarked on board a veſſel bound to Dunkirk, attended by an old ſervant of Hillaſton's, on whoſe fidelity and care they could depend. Rigby left England without regret: yet he could not be abſolutely convinced of his Lydia's death. Some unaccountable prepoſſeſſion had ſeized him, and he frequently told his friend that his heart often whiſpered to him that ſhe was not dead. This notion, which had not the moſt diſtant glimpe of probability, his friend endeavoured to deſtroy in him; for he thought that keeping ſuch an unreaſonable hope alive would only ſerve to torment him ſo much longer; when the poſitive certainty of her not exiſting would ſooner wear off, and be cured, than if he indulged thoſe deluſive and imaginary infatuations. Many converſations did they hold together on this ſubject in their paſſage, as well as when they landed.

As they reſolved to ſtay abroad three weeks or a month, they propoſed viſiting ſuch parts of Flanders in the vicinity of England, as ſhould be conſiſtent with their intended plan. They deſigned to ſee Ghent, Antwerp, and Bruffels, which would take them up as much time as they could well ſpare. Change of place, or variety of objects, had no effect upon Rigby; his melancholy was not to be ſo eaſily removed; and it was the more dreadful, as it was fixed and permanent. His grief was as lively as ever, and he really knew no reſpite from it; though he always paid that compliment to his friend's endeavours to pleaſe him, as to appear amused and diverted: but when in private, he gave a looſe to thoſe ſorrows

forrows which he had been hoarding up, and whose force was so much the greater, in proportion as they had been confined. Hillaſton ſaw with a great deal of uneaſineſs the change in his health, and the alteration in his appearance: he found that he nourished his woe in ſecret, and feared that it would deſtroy him at laſt. He conſidered it in his preſent ſituation, as doubly his duty to take care of his friend, who had met with this accident in his abſence from Lydia, when employed in his ſervice; nor was there any thing wanting on his part.

The chief reaſon of Hillaſton's perſuading him to leave England, was in hopes of diſſipating his melancholly by the difference of the objects he would continually meet with; whiſt at home every thing conſpired to remind him of the cauſe of his grief.

As they had no buſineſs to go upon that required haſte, they took their own time, and travelled as beſt ſuited their inclination and convenience. The ſecond night after their arrival in Flanders, they lay at Staden, a ſmall town beyond Ypreſs. In the morning, before their departure, Hillaſton's ſervant informed him there was an Engliſh gentleman in the inn where they were, who was in great diſtreſs, in want of every thing, and who had been dangerously ill from a wound he had received, that was hardly cured yet; and that he muſt periſh if he had not ſome aſſiſtance: that he had not ſeen him, but had learned this from the people of the houſe, to whom he was greatly in debt, and who began to be tired of ſupplying him with neceſſaries.

This account affected Hillaſton: his ears were ever open to the voice of diſtreſs: but a countryman in a ſtrange land had a double claim upon him. He deſired his ſervant to find out his chamber, and deliver his compliments to the ſick man, and acquaint him, that he would wait on him if agreeable, and pay

pay his respects to him. The stranger, whose name was Chapman, heard the message with rapture.

“Tell your master,” replied he eagerly, “who has been so kind as to take such notice of me, that I shall be glad to see him before I die, and thank him for his humane intentions, which can now be of no service to me.”

Hillaston went to him directly. The apartment in which he was lodged spoke his circumstances sufficiently, without an explanation. The wind had free access through the windows, and the rain descended through the shattered roof, which was all the defence he had from the weather. The meanness of the room struck Hillaston; but the appearance of the meagre pallid wretch who spoke to him, melted his heart with pity.

“It is kind of you, sir, to be thus charitable: it is a pleasure to my broken spirit, to behold the face of an Englishman again.”

There was something in his manner that indicated his being superior to the common rank of people, and which interested Hillaston still more particularly in his behalf. He drew near the bed, and seated himself on the side.

“I am very sorry indeed, sir,” said he, “to see you so ill, and find you so badly accommodated: but be of good cheer; every thing my pocket can command, you shall be supplied with: you shall have immediate assistance. Do not be cast down, sir: with God’s help we will recover you.”

“Ah, sir, that hour is past, my weakness tells me that my end is approaching: yet I fear to die. I look forward with horror: and all the ills I have lately suffered here, and they have been numerous, are nothing to what I dread will follow my departure into another world. You know not what a wretch you offer assistance to: one who is equally
— terrified

“fied at the thoughts of dying, and who is ashamed to live.”

“It is a dreadful state indeed: yet, by living, you may have an opportunity of repenting, and of making some atonement for your crimes: therefore you should wish to live. Your self-accusation seems to promise a reformation in your manners, should you recover.”

“It is for that only I desire to leave this bed, which I have scarcely hope that I shall rise from. How willingly would I do every thing in my power to restore peace to my own heart, by doing all the justice I could to those I have injured! But there are some whose wrongs exceed retribution. Oh, sir, I have oppressed innocence, I have beguiled virtue. I have been a sworn foe to all goodness; I am a thorough-paced villain.”

“Great as your offences may have been, yet there is an hope of pardon. Add not despair to your sins. You seem to be contrite, and have a proper abhorrence of them.”

“I have,” said Chapman, interrupting him. “My dreadful reflections upon this bed of death have sufficiently convinced me of the wickedness of my past conduct. The desperate and murderous hand of one of my associates in villainy reduced me to this situation. Oh Wilcox, Wilcox, what have you to answer for! And you much injured, lovely maid, how shall I atone for——”

Hillaston could bear it no longer: he started up in the middle of his address, and interrupted him with the most expressive curiosity and surprize in his voice and manner—“What Wilcox? What maid? Who are you?”

Chapman was alarmed at the eagerness with which he interrogated him: his conscious horrors, added to his excessive weakness, rendered him unable to bear his agitations. He looked wistfully at Hil-

lafton, without being able to fpeake; and then closed his eyes, as if to open them no more. A moment's recollection fufficed to convince Hillafton that he had acted with the greateft imprudence. He thought he was gone for ever: he felt him and found his pulse beat: he ran with all the hafte he could make to call for affiftance, which was foon procur- ed for him. He fent his fervant up to bring him in- telligence when he fhould recover, and paffed an hour as uneafily as ever he did before in his life. How much did he condemn his own eagernes and precipitation! But fo greatly was he furprized at the found of Wilcox's name, that he could not contain himfelf.

What a difcovery had he loft if this man fhould die? for he concluded it could be no other perfon than this Wilcox whom they had been in queft of, that this fick man meant. He walked about his chamber in the moft difordered ftate of mind. wait- ing his fervant's coming to inform him of his fuituati- on. One thing afforded him fatisfaction, and that was, that Rigby fleep longer than ufual that morn- ing, and had not yet been ftirring. At length his fervant came and relieved him from his painful uncer- tainty, by informing him that the fick gentleman was reftored to life again: and that the phyfician and furgeon would wait on him directly. He fent him back with his compliments to Mr. Chapman, and de- fired him to want for nothing, and only to think of his recovery; and that he would wait on him in the evening: for he feared to name a fhorter time, left his appearance might have a bad effect upon him.

From the phyfician and furgeon he learned that his extreme weaknefs was what they had moft to dread: that his wound was not dangerous, but would require a great deal of care to heal it tho- roughly. He asked if it was proper to move him into a more comfortable apartment: which they permit-
ted.

ted. He then enjoined them to be careful and regular in their attendance on him, which they promised, and left him to consider in what manner he should contrive to delay Rigby till he could have a proper explanation of the words he had heard, and which he determined at all events to be satisfied in. Giving his servant a strict charge not to mention a syllable of what had happened, or about the sick gentleman to Mr. Rigby, he let him enjoy his repose: his nature; wearied out by continual sorrow, required rest. He slept very long, and it was near eleven o'clock when he awoke. When he saw what hour it was by his watch, he was alarmed at his sleeping so long, and rose hastily to enquire of his friend why he had suffered him to lose so much time.

Hillaston congratulated him on the soundness of his rest, that all the noise could not disturb him: and on his demanding when they were to set out, complained of an indisposition; and hinted, that if it was not disagreeable to him, he would be glad to have an opportunity of continuing where they were all day. Rigby insisted upon it that they should not stir: and recommending it to him to have proper advice, staid constantly with him, administering to his fictitious illness with the greatest tenderness and care. Hillaston was concerned at giving him that temporary uneasiness which he felt for his indisposition: but it was unavoidable: to communicate what he knew might have been equally dangerous to Rigby and the sick man, from the transports of the former, and the languid state of the latter. Till he should be sure of the identity of the person, he resolved to conceal it from his friend, who left him early in the evening to enjoy a repose he did not want.

Soon after he was fixed in his chamber, he stole out to visit his invalid: as he was in a much more agreeable situation with regard to accommodations

than before, the sight was not so shocking. The sick man returned him all the acknowledgments that gratitude could dictate: declared he found himself much better, and that he had hopes of getting over this severe illness.

Hillaston, finding him able to endure talking, entered into a conversation with him, which lasted a long while, and in which he had all his doubts and scruples resolved; but which did not, nevertheless, serve to render him a bit easier. He assured Chapman, whose name he had now learned, that he might depend upon his friendship and assistance: that in a few days he should bring a gentleman to see him, who was more interested than himself in his story, and bade him prepare himself to see him, and try to recover his strength in the mean time. He used the most consoling and comfortable speeches to him, to inspire him with hope and spirits, and then left him. He formed his plan how he should break this matter to Rigby, whose warmth he feared, if it should be made known abruptly to him.

In the morning he declared himself perfectly restored, and desirous to pursue their tour for Ghent. They accordingly set out, but were obliged to leave Hillaston's servant behind them, who pretended to be very ill, but who was, in reality, only stationed as a spy, to watch Chapman. It was Hillaston's design in this jaunt, which was to last but for three or four days, to lead Rigby into a discovery of this matter by the most gentle means; and, when he should be thoroughly prepared for the recital, to bring him back again to the inn, where Chapman was.

Rigby was surprized when his friend, contrary to his custom, instead of repressing those fanciful notions he had entertained, and turning the conversation from those favourite topics which he was so fond of indulging himself in, rather encouraged it, and seemed

seemed to coincide in opinion with him. He perceived it, and demanded the reason of it.

“ I do not know,” said Hillaſton, “ whether it is
“ by frequently converſing with you on the ſubject,
“ or from what other cauſe, but I am inclined
“ ſometimes to think as you do concerning Lydia. I
“ can hardly imagine that Wilcox, that ſcoundrel,
“ would be deſperate enough to attempt her life ;
“ yet I am of opinion that ſhe has been very ill
“ treated by him.”

“ And I will avenge her wrongs, Hillaſton : if I
“ have life I will. But wherefore have we left the
“ country where the villain is ? perhaps in our ab-
“ ſence he may eſcape my vengeance.”

“ I believe we ſhall lull him into fancied ſecurity
“ by thus avoiding him ; and we may make our pu-
“ niſhment more ſure : he deſerves it. And ſome-
“ thing tells me that we ſhall learn more about him
“ than we thought of.”

Theſe words ſeemed to require an explanation, and ſtill Hillaſton proceeded in the moſt cautious and regular manner : and it was the third night before they returned to Staden, and finiſhed his intelligence.

Impatient as Rigby was to hear Chapman’s hiſtory, Hillaſton checked his tranſports, which were alarming, by telling him how dangerous their conſequences would be with regard to the perſon from whom they were to receive all their information. He even made him give him a ſolemn promiſe not to betray any anger or reſentment againſt Chapman, till he ſhould have finiſhed his tale.

When they alighted at the inn it was evening : and Hillaſton ſummoned his ſervant before him, who acquainted him that the ſick gentleman was much better, and ſo well recovered as to be able to ſit up. This intelligence was very agreeable to them both, and Hillaſton followed the ſervant into his room ; and af-

ter congratulating him on his recovery, asked him if he thought himself able to relate his story to the gentleman he had formerly mentioned to him, and who was very desirous to hear it; and he himself had forgotten many circumstances, as he had only given him the heads of it when they conversed together before. Chapman told him he believed he should be able to go through it; and would be more particular now than before. Hillafton left him, and returned immediately with his friend, who after expressing his concern at his illness, seated himself on one side of him and waited with the most anxious and tormenting impatience the unfolding this history, big with mystery and woe to him. Hillafton seated himself on the other side Chapman, who addressed them thus:

“Disagreeable and mortifying as it may be to me,
“to acquaint you with all the transactions of my
“past life, yet gratitude for your unexpected and
“unmerited kindness, compels me to it. I hope by
“a frequent reflection on my misdeeds, and the
“shame that must inevitably attend me in the relation of them, that I shall look upon them with
“proper horror; and all I have to request of you
“and this gentleman, is, that you will not view me
“in the light I deserve to appear, when you consider
“that I am resolved to make every amends in my
“power to those I have unhappily injured.

“I have already informed you, sir, that my name
“is Chapman: and the family I sprung from, have
“great reason to be ashamed of, and deny every
“connection with me. My father died when I was
“young: and an affectionate mother, unhappily too
“fond of me, indulged me in every thing I could
“wish for. I have had no other education than
“that I received from a very good school, where I
“was placed in the beginning of my life. I had
“an aversion to all kind of business; and having a
“middling

“ middling personal fortune, determined to lay part
“ of it out in the purchase of a commission. This
“ my mother consented to : and it would have been
“ put into execution, had not she died, and my fa-
“ ther’s executor, who did not approve of my going
“ into the army, refused to pay me the money, till I
“ was of age, which I then wanted three years of.

“ To this refusal I owe my ruin. My mother’s
“ fondness had put a sum of two hundred pounds in
“ my own power. I quitted the country, and with
“ this money, which I thought could not be ex-
“ hausted, went up to London. Young, unexpe-
“ rienced, fond of pleasure, of a good figure, and
“ rather handsome, I was a fit dupe for the design-
“ ing villains that London abounds with. I had but
“ a very few friends there, and those my petulance
“ and extravagance soon disgusted, and they shook
“ me off. I then was reduced to associate with those
“ acquaintances, I had picked up at a fashionable
“ coffee-house which I frequented : they introduced
“ me into company. Play was the sole business of
“ their evenings. I was obliged to do as they did,
“ or be despised. I was a novice, yet fortune fa-
“ voured me : I won for some time. Women were
“ not excluded our society. I became the favourite
“ of several. One beautiful creature I attached
“ myself to : all the money I won, was dedicated
“ to her. Fortune ceased to be propitious to me ;
“ in one night I was reduced to beggary.

“ I went to my girl, and complained to her of my
“ ill-luck : she pretended to pity me, but refused to
“ lend me any money, though I was convinced she
“ could not have dissipated those sums my folly had
“ lavished upon her. The next day she left me for
“ another. My pride would not put up with such
“ an insult. I challenged the man whom she fled
“ to, and he refused to fight for her. I went to her.
“ She threw her arms about my neck, and fore-
“ she

“ loved me better than ever for my spirit. I had
 “ resolution enough to despise and spurn her.

“ In penfive manner did I repair, after a double
 “ disappointment of her love and the loss of my
 “ money, to the coffee-house. A companion of our
 “ nocturnal riots beheld my melancholly : he ad-
 “ dressed me,

“ You were rather unfortunate, Mr. Chapman,
 “ last night ; but there was a set made at you, I do
 “ not wonder you lost.

“ I was not ignorant of his meaning, and per-
 “ ceived I had been cheated.

“ That was a circumstance,” said I, “ that I was
 “ unacquainted with before.”

“ But it is true.” Said he. “ Come do not be cast
 “ down. I pity you : a good handsome young fellow
 “ as you are should not be lost. I will lend you some
 “ money. I will do more : you shall be instructed in
 “ those arts which render gaming a science, and which
 “ baffle chance. Fortune has nothing to say to us.”

“ I embraced his offer with many expressions of
 “ gratitude.

“ But,” said he, “ we must enter into an agree-
 “ ment, I cannot communicate these things to you,
 “ by which you will make a fortune, without some
 “ recompence : you shall allow me such a part of
 “ your profits : and above all things, avoid women,
 “ for they will ruin you,”

“ The last part of his advice I could not attend
 “ to : they were my favourites, and women I must
 “ have. We entered into such an agreement as he
 “ proposed, and I became the slave of villany.
 “ Various were the scenes I passed through for near
 “ three years ; but they were infamous, and the
 “ remembrance of them is dreadful to me : how-
 “ ever, my passion for women ever kept me poor ;
 “ and my fondness for wine, never would suffer me
 “ to enjoy that coolness which is necessary to a
 “ gamester.

“ gamester. My health as well as my pocket suf-
“ fered in the amours I had.

“ Many quarrels which I was led into, established
“ my reputation as a man of spirit ; and I was con-
“ sidered in a respectable light only by those who
“ feared me ; for the honest part of mankind must
“ have detested me.

“ When I was at age, and received the fortune
“ which my father had designed for my establish-
“ ment in life, it was but natural to suppose, that
“ the experience I had at the gaming table, was
“ the last place I should return to : but such was
“ my infatuation, that I went with more eagerness
“ than ever to seek destruction.

“ I paid my old friend some money I owed him,
“ and commenced on my own bottom ; but I was
“ soon reduced to my former situation, and only be-
“ came a jackall to lure others to be preyed upon.
“ How many unwary and unhappy men have I been
“ instrumental in leading to their ruin ! and in what
“ a series of villainous actions have I been en-
“ gaged !

“ About this time my acquaintance with Wilcox,
“ began ; he had been introduced amongst us at a
“ club we had, and being possessed with the spirit
“ of play, and having a good deal of money, was
“ a very acceptable guest. I became more particu-
“ larly intimate with him, and he invited me to his
“ house. With him then lived a Mrs. Hillsden ;
“ and as she has a great share in the remainder
“ of my narrative, it is proper that I should de-
“ scribe her. She was at this time about six or se-
“ ven and thirty ; had a tolerable good face, an
“ excellent skin, a good voice, and in her person
“ had that *Embon-point*, which indicates a fondness
“ for pleasure. Her eyes, her actions shewed she
“ was devoted to it : but her words contradicted
“ the sentiments of her heart ; and virtue and ho-
“ nour

" nour were her favourite topics, while her man-
 " ners and conduct belied her tongue. She was sen-
 " sible and very artful, when her passions did not
 " run away with her, which was frequently the
 " case: violent in her temper, her hatred and her
 " love knew no controul; yet in general she could
 " dissemble those passions, and even deck her rage in
 " smiles. She possessed an entire dominion over
 " Wilcox, whom nevertheless she only loved as he
 " was subservient to her purposes. Variety was the
 " deity of her adoration, and man was the victim;
 " and while she submitted her body to the most
 " abandoned and unlimited prostitution, she ha-
 " rangued on the rewards which Heaven reserved
 " for the virtuous.

" Such shameful hypocrisy even offended me,
 " who had no pretence to goodness. But I conceal-
 " ed the disgust it gave me.

" It seems Wilcox had got acquainted with her at
 " a friend's house in the country, with whom she
 " lived after she ran away from her husband, by
 " whom she had many children; upon pretence
 " of ill usage; though the truth was, she
 " was tired of him. She eloped with a young
 " fellow who could better satisfy her desires:
 " she soon left him for the person with whom Wil-
 " cox found her; and being also weary of him,
 " came up to London about two months before.

" She was extravagant in her dress and manner,
 " and they kept a very good house. It seems an un-
 " cle from whom Wilcox had great expectations,
 " died a little before this, and left him a good sum of
 " money: and I heard also in their conversation,
 " that he was his executor, and had large concerns
 " in trust for a Miss Bennet, his cousin."

At the sound of her name, Rigby could scarce
 contain himself. But Hillaston, aware of the effect
 it might have upon him, watched his countenance,
 and

and gave him a look that repressed his emotions in some measure. Chapman proceeded without interruption.

“ From these circumstances, I concluded that he
“ would be a very proper person to stick close to :
“ and in some time I found that Mrs. Hillsden made
“ some advances which I met half way ; and in
“ short a very little intimacy was sufficient with her
to obtain every thing you could ask.

“ Voluptuous and libidinous to an excess, she
“ sought every gratification of her favourite passion ;
“ all others were only subordinate. In some of our
“ softer moments, I touched upon the string of in-
“ terest, and found she was not deaf to the sound.
“ We agreed to divide the spoil of Wilcox between
“ us : the plot was well executed, and met with
“ success. She continued to blind him by an appa-
“ rent fondness for his person, whilst I enjoyed the
“ reality of it in private, at least for the time.

“ The many losses that Wilcox met with, the fre-
“ quent demands she made on him, and his expensive
“ manner of living, made it necessary for him to
“ take up a considerable sum of Miss Bennet’s mo-
“ ney. This gave him some uneasiness : but we
“ soon drowned his reflections, by plunging him
“ again into the torrent which had almost carried
“ him away before. In a short time he found himself
“ in such a situation, and so involved, that to go
“ back, was worse than to go on. However, he
“ had great hopes of succeeding to his cousin’s
“ estate by her death : for, as he informed us, she
“ was naturally delicate, and at that time was in so
“ bad a state of health, that there was little expect-
“ ation of her recovery ; for the physicians had gi-
“ ven her over. This consideration used to be some
“ comfort to him under his misfortunes, and he
“ would frequently talk of this event as near hap-
“ pening.

“ I

“ It was usual for him to go once in six weeks or
“ two months to see his wife, whom he kept in soli-
“ tude in Berkshire, in order to preserve appearan-
“ ces. He never staid above three days there.
“ Once on his return from thence, we perceived him
“ much altered, and more thoughtful and melanchol-
“ ly than he had been. We strove to find out the
“ cause of this change; and at last he informed us
“ that his cousin, whom he hoped and supposed he
“ should have found dead, was on the contrary
“ much recovered, and gave the most promising as-
“ surances of being re-instated in her health again.
“ That disagreeable and mortifying as this was to
“ him, yet it was still rendered more so, by the cir-
“ cumstances which attended it: for he found this
“ cure was occasioned by a Mr. Rigby, who had
“ not only been the means of preventing his marry-
“ ing her, and thereby enjoying the estate himself,
“ but also was then courting her, and from every
“ thing he could learn, would marry her when she
“ was of age, which would soon happen: and
“ then the consequence would be, that he should be
“ obliged to account for those sums which he had
“ embezzled of her's, to a large amount, and
“ which he was totally incapable of paying.”
“ Then,” added he, “ I shall be ruined entirely.
“ Now if I could but disappoint this match, it would
“ gratify both my revenge and ambition.” “ But
“ how to do it, was the question.”

“ There will be no possibility of effecting it, if
“ Rigby stays in the country. I have unhappily
“ alarmed her,” said he, “ by letting my passion get
“ the better of my prudence: and I have already ex-
“ perience that hot-headed young fool's despera-
“ tion.”

“ We entered into council, and Mrs. Hilliden's
“ versatile genius was of the greatest service to us
“ by forming a thousand plots; but the chief of
“ them

“ them was, to get Miss Bennet into our hands, as
 “ then we thought that she could be brought more
 “ easily to terms.

“ Wilcox had a spy to watch all Rigby's motions :
 “ and from him we received an account that he
 “ was gone away but for a short time. As his re-
 “ turn was fixed for a few days there was not a mo-
 “ ment to be lost.

“ I went down along with him : and on pretence
 “ of urgent business, and a sham story of a person
 “ who was going to break, that had her money
 “ in his hands she was inveigled up to town. We
 “ travelled up in a post-coach ! and the charming
 “ person, good sense, and gentle disposition of the
 “ young lady, interested me greatly in her behalf :
 “ but my design was to ruin her for the sake of that
 “ villain Wilcox and his abandoned harlot. When
 “ we arrived in town she was lodged in his house,
 “ which went under another name ; and Mrs. Hilf-
 “ den appeared as the landlady who let lodgings.
 “ The unsuspecting girl retired early to rest, fatigued
 “ with her journey : and we entered into a diaboli-
 “ cal council on her fate below. She was now in
 “ our power—What was to be done ?—Many were
 “ the schemes which were started, and none would
 “ answer our purpose. At last it came into Wil-
 “ cox's head to force her to marry me, upon my
 “ giving him a release as executor, and resigning
 “ over to him above half her remaining fortune.
 “ This was plausible enough, and it was to be put in
 “ execution on the next morning : I was to be re-
 “ presented to her as a young man of a good for-
 “ tune, and who was deeply in love with her. In
 “ the latter part of this assertion they were not so
 “ far from truth as they were in the former ; for
 “ certain it is that I admired her much, and deter-
 “ mined to abandon my former evil courses, and
 “ make her as good a husband as I could, in case
 “ our

“ our plan took effect ; and I must confess, that I
 “ heartly wished it might : not considering the
 “ injustice that would be gone both to her and the
 “ man who had engaged her affections.

“ I attended at the appointed hour in the morning
 “ at Wilcox’s, to know what success his first appli-
 “ cation to her in my behalf would have. I was
 “ placed in an adjoining closet, where I could hear
 “ every word.

“ After breakfast was over, the tea-things remov-
 “ ed, Wilcox asked her how she liked the gentleman
 “ that came up with them yesterday. She replied,
 “ very well.”

“ I am glad you do, Lydia,” said he, “ for then
 “ you will not have any aversion to the proposal I am
 “ going to make you. He is a young gentleman of
 “ family and fortune, and has taken a particular lik-
 “ ing to you ; and as you seem to approve him now,
 “ you will have no sort of objection to marrying
 “ him.”

“ Upon my word, Mr. Wilcox, I shall, and in-
 “ superable ones.”

“ Pray what are they ?”

“ It does not signify what they are, but they are
 “ such as cannot be overcome.”

“ I suppose you will not be averse to his paying his
 “ addresses to you.”

“ I shall, and desire I may not see his face .

“ Pho, pho, that is all stuff ; every woman likes
 “ flattery, and seldom cares whence it comes from.

“ Upon my word, Mr. Wilcox you pretend to judge
 “ very freely of me, but you are exceedingly wrong ;
 “ and I desire once more that I may not see his face
 “ again.”

“ This peremptory and extraordinary behaviour is
 “ rather unusual with you Lydia : it was formerly
 “ otherwise. I suppose it is Mr. Rigby who has put
 “ these

‘these pretty notions into your head, and taught you
‘to behave in this manner.’

‘I did not come with you to London, sir, to be
‘treated thus : let us expedite the business we came
‘about, and let me return to the country.’

‘This is a very pretty spirit you exert indeed, Ly-
‘dia. But I must now inform you, that it was upon
‘this business only you were brought up to London,
‘and which must be finished before you go back
‘again.’

‘Must sir! must!—, know that my poor father
‘was so much imposed upon by you, that he put it
‘in your power to prevent my marrying till I am one
‘and twenty ; but I do not believe you can force me
‘to marry whom you please.’

‘What would you have, Lydia? is not this gen-
‘tleman superior to Rigby in every thing? he must
‘be your husband.’

‘If that Rigby was here, you would as soon eat
‘your nails as talk thus of him ; you fear
‘him at the moment you are abusing him : but I
‘will leave this place instantly,’ said she, ringing
‘the bell.’

‘You are greatly mistaken, you cannot quit this
‘place without my permission : Do you think I will
‘reign you and your fortune to the man whom I so
‘much detest? no, you are in my power now, and
‘so I will keep you.’

‘Do you mean to murder me?’

‘No, I have too great a regard to myself. I am go-
‘ing to have company you may not like, and had
‘better retreat to your chamber : you must endure a
‘little confinement.’

“She answered not, but retired into her room ;
“the door of which he locked, and then went
“down stairs ; I followed him. The coolness he per-
“served during the conversation was entirely fictitious ;
“for

“ for his agitations were great while he was with us.
 “ You have heard what has passed,” said he,
 “ and small are the hopes I have of bending her to
 “ my will. What is to be done !”

“ Mrs. Hilliden advised him to use force, but he
 “ was more inclinable to gentle means : and in this I
 “ opposed her also. I desired to be admitted to see
 “ Lydia, and try what effect my addresses might
 “ have upon her : it was thought imprudent to at-
 “ tack her as yet, and in about two hours after, I
 “ was permitted to see her. Wilcox prepared her to
 “ receive me—I followed him up stairs ; and after a
 “ few minutes conversation he left us together. I
 “ saw the tears trickle down her lovely cheek as she
 “ spoke. My heart was melted, and I found my
 “ words fail me : yet she was an object desirable
 “ and most amiable, and it was my business to
 “ address her.”

“ Madam,” said I approaching her, “ Mr. Wilcox
 “ has informed me, that he has already acquainted
 “ you with the cause of this visit, which I pre-
 “ sume——”

“ I faltered, and hesitated as I spoke.”

“ Sir,” said she, interrupting me with the greatest
 “ dignity in her manner, “ I am told you are a gen-
 “ tleman : your address and behaviour confirm me in
 “ that opinion. It is true, that Mr. Wilcox has also
 “ told me you have done me the honour to think well
 “ of me. Greatly as I am flattered by your esteem,
 “ I think it only generous and honest to inform you,
 “ that cannot by any means listen to your suit : my
 “ heart is already engaged, and my affections are
 “ united to a gentleman who was, unhappily for me,
 “ absent when I was trepanned away. After this de-
 “ claration, I do not presume, sir, that you will chuse
 “ to throw away your time, as it must be to no pur-
 “ pose ; and that you will use your endeavours to ex-
 “ tricate me from these difficulties, and free me from
 “ the

‘ the restraint I am under upon your account, by declining to persecute me any longer. I am well convinced Mr. Rigby will make you any return in his power, and it will be the only means of securing my esteem.’

‘ Charming lady ; what would I not do to gain your esteem ; or venture, to purchase your regard ? Your cousin has hinted to me that you thought me not disagreeable ; and, recommended by him, I presume to acquaint you with the sincere and honourable passion my heart entertains for you.’

“ She would not suffer me to proceed.”

‘ I thought you were a gentleman,’ said she, with an air of contempt, ‘ I am sorry I was so grossly deceived in you. Nothing but the distress of my situation, and the hope of interesting you in my behalf, could have made me disclose the secret of my heart. Had you known the pain it gave me, perhaps you would have paid more respect to it : but I am sure you are void of all delicacy, or even humanity.’

“ I began to speak again, and in the most soothing manner calm her anger and deprecate her wrath.”

‘ I will hear no more,’ said she, ‘ and am sorry that I am obliged to leave the room to protect myself from your insults.’

“ As she spoke she retired to her chamber, and fastening herself in, left me to my cogitations. I saw her resolution : and the affection she had conceived for Mr. Rigby gave me but very little chance of succeeding in her regard. I pitied her, and resolved to serve her if I could : yet I would have much rather married her. However, if I did intend to render myself useful to her, it would be only by pretending to coincide in their schemes, and do as they did : but that was by no means determined. Mrs. Hillsden had been a witness to
“ our

“ our conversation, and when I went down stairs,
 “ found her in a very great passion, and advising
 “ the most violent measures; and he and one cap-
 “ tain Tipton in earnest discourse concerning of the
 “ method of disposing of her in case she should con-
 “ tinue refractory.

“ When I saw Tipton I trembled for Lydia.
 “ Had you known the man as well as I did, you
 “ would have trembled for the hapless young lady
 “ too.

Here he was interrupted by the entrance of the surgeon, who came to dress his wounds. Rigby found himself scarcely able to contain his passion. His heart was swollen with rage and resentment: it was almost bursting. In secret had he devoted Wilcox: his vengeance was at that instant arming against him. But his anxiety to hear the remainder of the story, made him bear, with an appearance of patience, the recital of the evils which his dearest Lydia had suffered, and and from the man who was then relating them. His eyes were suffused with tears at the thoughts of the woes she endured; and his heart throbbed with gratitude and love, when he heard of her constancy and affection.

He determined in his own mind to begin with punishing Chapman, as soon as ever he was sufficiently recovered; and when he had thoroughly informed himself where the others were to be found, to give them the reward of their demerits. The surgeon at last left his patient, and Rigby thought the visit very long. When they were again left by themselves Chapman resumed his history.

“ I was interrupted, I believe, when I came to
 “ the conversation between captain Tipton and
 “ Wilcox, concerning Miss Bennet. It is necessary
 “ you should know something of him. He was de-
 “ scended of a noble family, which he disgraced by
 “ his crimes: interest, not merit made him comman-
 “ der

“ der of a king’s ship. He was broke afterwards
 “ for mal-practices; never was there a man whose
 “ feet were better acquainted with the paths of vil-
 “ lains. The boisterous service in which he had
 “ been bred, had entirely banished what little hu-
 “ manity he might have had originally: cruel and
 “ barbarous to those beneath him, and in his power:
 “ abject and fawning on those whom he feared.
 “ Bound by no ties of honour or conscience, every
 “ action was proper and just with him, as it suited
 “ his own convenience: debauched to the last ex-
 “ cess in his commerce with women, he knew not
 “ what delicacy or love was.”

“ These were the principles of this man: but he
 “ had an agreeable face, a good person, and a win-
 “ ning address. Cunning and sagacious, he pene-
 “ trated into the notions of the persons he was con-
 “ nected with, and always turned them to his own
 “ purposes, which were ever fraudulent. But if he
 “ had ever any particular deep-laid plan of villainy
 “ to execute, he gave those who knew him well
 “ sufficient notice of it, by appearing extraordinari-
 “ ly religious and devout. To relate his history, or
 “ the many tricks he played with those who reposed
 “ any confidence in him, would take up too much
 “ time. But such was the man with whom Wilcox
 “ was then consulting concerning Miss Bennet’s fate.
 “ The resolution she had shewn to me, in so abso-
 “ lutely prohibiting my addresses, had enraged Mrs.
 “ Hillsden, and puzzled Wilcox: he knew it would
 “ be next to an impossibility to keep her in the house
 “ undiscovered for any time; and what to do he
 “ knew not. Tipton’s genius had full employment
 “ in this work of iniquity. He proposed to take her
 “ to the continent, and when they had her in a strange
 “ country, they would be better able to reduce her
 “ to their own terms: besides they should be under
 “ no apprehensions there, and might secure her for
 “ ever,

“ ever, if they chose. This scheme was plausible :
“ it was the only one that could be executed, and it
“ was resolved to pursue it without delay.

“ Tipton, who was supposed to be better ac-
“ quainted with those matters than we were, under-
“ took to hire a sloop to carry us to France,
“ to be ready in three day at farthest. That
“ was settled : but the next circumstance was how
“ to persuade the world that she was dead :
“ that required some contrivance. Among those
“ women who earn a precarious livelihood and cer-
“ tain disease, by a loathsome prostitution, was one
“ whom the surgeons had given over as irrecovera-
“ ble. On her we fixed, though almost putrid with
“ the dreadful disorder ; her did we persuade to per-
“ sonate the pure, the virtuous Lydia : she suffered
“ herself to be removed for a small sum of money,
“ to a house wherein some of our creatures lived,
“ and who were dependent on us for their subsist-
“ ance. The night of the third day this unhappy
“ wretch expired : she was buried in great pomp,
“ and the news papers lamented the untimely death
“ of Miss Bennet, who was heiress to a considerable
“ fortune, in which she was succeeded by Mr. Wil-
“ cox. This affair delayed our voyage.

“ In the mean time I was permitted to see her :
“ and her cousin still pressed her to yield to marry
“ me, as the only means of extricating her from her
“ present confinement. I knew that every thing I
“ said to her was overheard by Mrs. Hillsden or Wilcox,
“ who were placed in a closet where they could hear,
“ but not see me. Still I endeavoured to win her
“ consent ; and still she rejected me with the most
“ laudable constancy. It is true, that I should have
“ esteemed myself happy, if I could have married
“ her ; but as that was now out of the question, I
“ found my heart affected by her tears, and I pitied
“ her. I had just drawn my pencil out of my pocket,
“ with

“ with an intention of writing a few words on a slip
 “ of paper, to give her some hope, when Wilcox en-
 “ tered the room. Whether he had any suspicion of
 “ me, or whether he thought the conversation too
 “ long, I cannot pretend to say: still she rejected
 “ every proposal of his or mine with the greatest
 “ firmness. I was obliged to leave her, and Wilcox
 “ again locked her up.

“ Mrs. Hillsden did not spare her insults at this pe-
 “ riod, which the unhappy young lady bore with the
 “ greatest patience and resignation. Every thing
 “ was now prepared for our departure: for the peo-
 “ ple who inhabited the house, where the fictitious
 “ Lydia Bennet was supposed to die, were immedi-
 “ ately removed to another quarter of the town, and
 “ handsomely rewarded for their trouble.

“ That night it was agreed we should set out, for
 “ the ship was ready for us. About twelve we left
 “ London, in a post coach, and drove with all expe-
 “ dition down to Greenwich, where Tipton was
 “ waiting to receive us; and we carried the unfor-
 “ tunate lady on board, and set sail immediately.
 “ She was more dead than alive, during this jour-
 “ ney. In the coach she addressed Wilcox in the
 “ most supplicating manner, offered him half her for-
 “ tune, and conjured him by every thing he held
 “ dear, to restore her to her friends again. It was
 “ entirely unavailing: every principle of humanity
 “ and tenderness was extinct in his breast; and
 “ though I felt for Lydia's situation, I dared not
 “ shew myself affected, if I wished to render her
 “ any service. When we were all aboard, we en-
 “ tered into a consultation on the steps we should
 “ take, to leave her in France for ever, and by that
 “ means ensure the possession of her fortune to Wil-
 “ cox.

“ Happy in being thus able to get her so securely
 “ into our hands, we indulged our pleasure, and fell
 Vol. II I “ to

“ to drinking. Tipton got elevated with the wine,
 “ and capable of doing any villainous action: he
 “ swore he would go to bed to Miss Bennet, as she
 “ would not be a bit the worse for the nunnery,
 “ where they intended to place her afterwards. That
 “ scoundrel Wilcox heard, with patience, the pro-
 “ posal for ruining his cousin. I objected to it, and
 “ observed that I was bound to defend the honour of
 “ the lady, whom I had made proposals to as my
 “ wife, and though she refused me now, her mind
 “ might change. Wilcox replied, that I might put
 “ that out of my head; for she was already engag-
 “ ed, and that she would never consent.” Then,
 “ said I, ‘let her be engaged to whom she will, I
 “ will defend her honor, and preserve her from vio-
 “ lation.’

“ Tipton started up: but I was next to the cabin
 “ in which she was, and rushed into it. Fortunate-
 “ ly there was a case of loaded pistols of his, hang-
 “ ing up. I seized them, and drawing my own
 “ *Couteau de Chase*, declared I would defend her, at
 “ the hazard of my life; assuring the trembling
 “ maid, she had nothing to fear, and that I would
 “ be responsible for her safety.”

Nothing could equal Rigby's emotions at this rela-
 tion: he sat in a state of the utmost torment: the
 big drops of sweat poured down his face at the idea
 of the danger his beloved had been in: but when he
 found the part which Chapman had taken, he could
 no longer contain his transports; and starting from
 his seat, he ran, and threw his arms about his neck,
 crying out at the same time, “ I forgive you,
 “ I forgive you all the wrongs you did my
 “ poor Lydia or to me: I will forget them all,
 “ and henceforth you shall be my brother and
 “ friend.”

“ Good God!” said the affrighted Chapman, “ to
 “ whom have I been disclosing this scene of iniqui-
 “ ty?

“ ty? Are you that Rigby whom the gentle Lydia
 “ has so often called upon in the agony of her
 “ heart? I fear you are: and if so, how shall I
 “ support your presence!”

“ The last generous behaviour to the dear girl
 “ obliterates the remembrance of all your former
 “ wrongs. You shall be always dear to me,” added
 he, straining him close to his breast; “ I will love
 “ and honour you ever. But proceed, I beseech
 “ you, proceed with your tale: my heart is burst-
 “ ing with impatience to hear it.”

“ I will,” replied Chapman, “ as well as my
 “ confusion will permit me: for I must take shame
 “ to myself for not continuing my vigilance in her
 “ behalf. I had scarcely assured her of my resolu-
 “ tion of defending her, when Tipton followed me
 “ into the cabin. Desperate at some moments,
 “ yet timid at others, he saw me prepared to receive
 “ him, and dreaded to attack me.”

“ Why are you armed thus, Chapman?” said he.

“ Can you ask me the reason? By every sacred
 “ power, I will not leave this lady while I have a bili-
 “ ty to defend her: you know my determination, and
 “ had better quit me.”

“ After some unsuccessful altercation, he took my
 “ advice, and went away. The poor lady knew
 “ not the cause of this extraordinary exertion in her
 “ behalf. It was hardly possible to keep life in her,
 “ what with sickness and terror: however, she was
 “ able to gather from what had passed that I was
 “ her friend. She asked me the occasion of my thus
 “ taking her part; and I endeavoured to avoid the
 “ question as much as possible, by assuring her of
 “ my attachment to her interest, and that I would
 “ suffer no injury to be done to her. This seemed
 “ to give her some pleasure. I persuaded her to lay
 “ down on the bed that was prepared for her, and I
 “ happily prevailed.

‘I will watch you, Miss Bennet,’ said I; ‘and depend upon my honor and fidelity.’

‘I thank you,’ said she, ‘for your kindness, sir: I will depend upon you, and hope you will not abuse the confidence I repose in you: My poor Rigby would thank you too for this kindness, were he here.’

“The tears fell as she spoke. I retired, till she had adjusted herself; and, when I thought she had lain down, returned into the cabin. We had a great deal of conversation; and, as I found she was inclinable to sleep, I left her, and watched at the door, for fear of her being surprized. My mind was employed in the mean time how to extricate her from their hands, and restore her again to her friends. I never left her that day: and, favoured with a prosperous gale, we landed at Dunkirk that night. I gave her a caution to secure her apartment: and she retired as soon as she could, to enjoy a repose she so much wanted. Wilcox reconciled me to Tipton, who apologized for his intended behaviour to Miss Bennet, by saying he was very much in liquor, but had really no such design; and gave me many commendations for my spirit and honour in the affair. This being settled, we being all equally engaged in this undertaking, however villainous, were obliged to unite together, to ensure the success of it. Many schemes were started, and none were fixed upon to be put into execution.

“The next night we came to this town, and here we renewed our deliberations. They seemed to trust me with their designs, and I gave into them, till I should get them to some place where there was an English ambassador to apply to in Miss Bennet’s behalf. It was rather late when we arrived here; and being naturally fond of the bottle, I sat up with Tipton after Wilcox retired to bed. He staid with us about two hours after supper,

“supper, and seemed to join with me in opinion,
 “that it would be better to let Miss Bennet return
 “to England, upon her binding herself to give him
 “such a sum of money, and not to call him to any
 “account for what had passed. The most moderate
 “terms were talked of, and there seemed to be a
 “probability of doing every thing in a quiet man-
 “ner. But this was only a scheme to deceive me,
 “as I have the best reason in the world to believe.

“When Tipton and I were left alone we plied the
 “bottle briskly, and drank very hard: I became
 “greatly intoxicated in the morning, about three
 “o’clock, and recollect that Tipton was more in his
 “senses than I was: and that is all I can remember.
 “What I suppose is, that finding me in such a state,
 “and so little capable of defending myself, he mix-
 “ed some drug in my wine, and, when he found
 “me quite stupid, stabbed me in the breast; and
 “thinking that he had dispatched me, or that I
 “should bleed to death, put me to bed and left me
 “there.

“When I recovered my senses, which, I suppose,
 “the great loss of blood contributed to restore to
 “me sooner than it would have otherwise happened,
 “I found myself in bed, with my cloaths on, and all
 “bloody. I had just strength enough left to call for
 “assistance, which I fortunately got; and, as soon
 “as my wound was dressed, fainted away: and how
 “long I lay in that state of insensibility I know not:
 “but, when I came to myself, and enquired after
 “my companions, they were all flown: the lady
 “and Wilcox went one way, and Tipton, alone,
 “went another. The latter said, that having made
 “me drunk for a frolic, they left me there, to see
 “how I should behave when I became sober; and
 “they would call for me in three or four days. I
 “penetrated into the mystery of this behaviour at
 “once; and saw, too late, my own folly. I was

“ now in a strange country, deserted by my villain-
“ ous companions ; and, with very little money in
“ my pocket, exposed to want and destruction. In
“ these hours of distress and pain, all the iniquity
“ of my past life came in review before me. I
“ shuddered with horror at the sight : no friend to
“ apply to for relief : for I had been the enemy of
“ mankind, and was deservedly shunned : no eye
“ wept for me, no heart pitied me : my crimes had
“ banished compassion far away, and I only experi-
“ enced a part of that misery I had been instrumen-
“ tal in bringing on others. These uneasy reflections
“ of a mind laden with sin retarded my cure ; and
“ my money being gradually expended, I was re-
“ duced to the greatest want, and had expired mise-
“ rably, if this gentleman had not humanely and
“ generously relieved and assisted me. I shall al-
“ ways owe my life to him, and, more than that,
“ my future and eternal happiness. My conduct
“ shall be the reverse of what it has been : and I
“ hope my endeavours to restore to those I have
“ wronged what I so unjustly obtained, will expiate
“ some of my offences. I will earn my bread by the
“ sweat of my brows, and the labour of my hands,
“ before I will return to those paths I have so happi-
“ ly quitted.

“ You will do well,” said Hillaston ; “ but let
“ your repentance be sincere, and you shall not want
“ a friend.”

“ Not while I live,” added Rigby. “ The kind,
“ the generous defence of my helpless Lydia deserves
“ my greatest and sincerest acknowledgments. But
“ yet I am wretched, for I am in doubt about her
“ fate : I know not whether she yet lives, or where
“ she is if she does.”

“ Really, sir,” said Chapman, “ I cannot tell :
“ but I believe that Wilcox would not attempt her
“ life ; and I imagine, by what I could learn from
“ their

“ their conversation, that their design was to place
“ her in some convent in France ; but where I am
“ totally ignorant. If my health or my circumstan-
“ ces would permit, I should be glad to accompany
“ you in search of her, hoping that heaven might
“ give me an opportunity of restoring her to you,
“ from whom I was so instrumental in seducing
“ her.”

Both Rigby and Hillaston gave him the strongest assurances of their friendship, and determination to serve him : and fearing lest any farther discourse might hurt him, they went away, recommending it to him to let nothing disturb him, but get well as fast as he could, that they might go in search of Lydia as soon as possible.

When the two friends were alone, Rigby gave vent to the rage and grief which tore his breast, and which he was obliged to conceal before Chapman. Hillaston endeavoured to calm his transports.

“ Shall I not be revenged ;” exclaimed the frantic lover : “ Shall I not inflict punishment on that villain who has blasted my hopes, injured my love, and almost reduced me to despair : Shall I ever forget the wrongs he has done thee, my best beloved Lydia ?”—No. And if Heaven gives me life, I will avenge thee. Think, Hillaston, think of that hapless innocent in the hands of such ruffians ! Is not the thought distraction ? Chapman, I will adore thee : thou savedst my Lydia’s purity from contamination : nor was her virgin honour violated by brutal force. That, even that, is some comfort to me : for I could only have outlived the punishment of such villains, ere I descended to the grave myself.”

Hillaston soothed and consoled him : and they determined to go in search of her through that part of France which was nearest to them ! as they concluded he could not have gone far in the time he was absent from

from England: but Chapman's weak state delayed them, as they resolved to take him along with them.

In a week's time he was greatly recovered, and as they proposed making short and easy journeys; which the nature of their enquiries obliged them to, was thought able to go along with them. During that week, Rigby was alway with Chapman, making him repeat that part of his story, where Lydia was most aggrieved, or when she had mentioned him. At the melancholy tale, his breast heaved with sighs, and his eyes poured forth bitter tears. When he had recounted the treatment she had met with from Wilcox and Tipton, and their infamous designs against her honour, his heart swelled with rage: not able to contain himself, his anger led him to form the heaviest curses on them.

At length the hour came, that was to carry him in quest of his faithful, his adorable Lydia: hope was his companion, and love was his guide. But his heart began to despair, when, after three months spent in the most diligent enquiries at every convent in all the towns he went through, he could receive no account of Lydia. The more sanguine his hopes had been, the more dreadful and piercing was the disappointment he met. His patience was almost worn out; especially as he imagined he was wasting time to very little purpose, when he might return to England, and wrest the secret of the place of her confinement from Wilcox. With this design he addressed his associates. "It is in vain for us, my
 " good friends, to continue the search. which, can
 " be productive of nothing but disappointment and
 " trouble. For my share, I am determined to give
 " it over and return to England: and if Wilcox is
 " yet on earth, if Heaven has not called him to re-
 " ceive the punishments due to his crimes, I will
 " force him to tell me where Miss Bennet is immur-

ed.

“ ed. We have already wasted too much time, and
“ I wish I had pursued this plan at first : perhaps,
“ ere this, I should have been informed of my fate,
“ and not spent so many hours in a state of anxious
“ uncertainty, worse than death.”

Chapman, who gained the esteem both of Hilla-
ston and Rigby, by the many good qualities he possess-
ed, and which they found in him every day, joined
him in opinion, and Hillaston was obliged to submit.
Instead of continuing their course, they directed it to-
wards the sea-coast of Normandy ; as from thence
was their shortest passage to England. The second
night after this determination, they lay at a small
town on the confines of Champagne. Before they
had retired to rest, they had employed themselves in
contriving in what manner to come at Wilcox. This
was their chief and general conversation : it was the
only idea that engaged the afflicted Rigby’s imagina-
tion ; whilst the hope and desire of vengeance sup-
ported his spirits, and enabled him to endure his woes.
His friends retired to rest : he sat a while in his
chamber, reading, before he went to bed, and then
he could not sleep. Indeed that kind soother of sor-
row had been long a stranger to him. He tossed and
tumbled about. But he could not close his eyes.
Whilst he lay thus tormented with a thousand differ-
ent thoughts, that all conspired to increase his unea-
siness, he was alarmed by a great noise. He started
up, and listened more attentively. He heard the cry
of fire. “ I may be of service to some of the unhap-
“ py sufferers,” said he, throwing himself out of bed,
and putting on his cloaths : “ though wretched my-
“ self, yet let me not forget the cause of humanity.”

He called Hillaston up, as he went by his room,
and hurried to the scene of distress. It was in his
neighbourhood : a convent was on fire, the flames
raged furiously, the gates were thrown open, and
the sacred sanctuary of recluse piety was now entered

by every body who was willing to assist the affrighted nuns.

Amongst the foremost of those who rushed through the flames, was Rigby. He ran to that part where they burned with the greatest fierceness. He was one of the foremost in the assistance of the distressed. Thus employed, he thought he heard his name called: such was the noise, such the confusion, that he could not distinguish it clearly: a second time he heard it more shrilly than before: the voice was familiar to him. He started, and gazed wildly about. He turned his eyes to a corner of the building, towards which the flames were rolling with great rapidity, and perceived a female in distress. He held his arms out to receive her. The height was but small: she flung herself down, and he caught her. Her veil fell off, and he discovered the face of his Lydia. "It is! it is her! it is my Lydia!" cried the enraptured lover, pressing her to his breast. But she was lifeless: fear and joy had deprived her of speech. Distracted with a thousand tender passions, he knew not what to do. The first thing that suggested itself was, to carry her from the reach of the flames. He snatched her up, and ran with her into the garden. She recovered her senses. "It is my Rigby!" said she: the sight of him was more than she could bear, and she closed her eyes again.

The terrified Rigby thought she was gone for ever. His trembling arms could no longer support her, and he would have dropped her on the ground, if Hillaaston, who pursued his friend's steps had not come at that moment to his relief. "I have her, Hillaaston!" said he, breathless with fear at the sight of her in that condition. "I have her again! but she is dead: she is lost to me. Take her, I beseech you, I am incapable of supporting her any longer."

Hillaaston received the exanimated maid, whilst
Rigby

Rigby watched her return to life, with looks of inexpressible love and anxious fear. At length she recovered herself, and convinced of the reality of her Rigby's presence, gave a loose to her joy.

He snatched her to his panting breast: a thousand kisses did he imprint on her lips. He knew not what he did: his brain was almost turned, by the rapturous reverse of fortune he experienced, in finding all he held dear, so unexpectedly again.

Nor was she less affected. Hillaston did not behold their mutual joy unmoved: he led them towards the inn, yet doubting of the existence of each other, and scarcely believing their happiness to be real.

With some difficulty was she taken through the fire, and conducted towards their lodgings. Still excessively agitated and terrified at what was past, her trembling limbs could scarcely sustain her; her spirits were all alarmed, and she hardly could be said to enjoy her reason.

"Oh! Mr. Rigby," said she, "how came you here! by what lucky chance have I found you at last? Ah, I have suffered a great deal since I saw you. Why would you leave me, since you were my only friend?"

The tears following these words, uttered in the most plaintive voice, pierced Rigby to the heart.

"I will never leave you more, my adorable Lydia," replied he; "no power shall ever separate us. I have been long seeking thee, my love, and Heaven be praised, I have found thee at last."

By this time they reached the inn. The first object that struck her eyes, was Chapman, fighting with another man. The moment she saw them, she gave a loud scream, and fainted away again in Rigby's arms, who removed her from the scene of confusion, into an apartment.

Hillaston ran to the combatants,

"Die,

“Die, thou treacherous villain,” said Chapman, making a lunge at his antagonist: he could not parry the thrust, and it brought him to the earth.

“That is the scoundrel,” said he, “that stabbed me, when he had intoxicated me with wine, and stupified me with medicines: the hour of vengeance is at last come, and I have fairly rewarded his villainy.”

Hillaston raised the wretched man, and procured some help for him. He acknowledged before all the people whom the rencontre had drawn about them, that he received his death justly from Chapman’s hands, in reward of his reachery.

On being asked by Hillaston, what brought him there? he replied, “to seek for Miss Bennet, and chance alone had conducted him.

“After Wilcox and I,” said he, “had settled the plan of Chapman’s destruction, which I endeavoured to put in execution, by stabbing him when incapable of helping himself, I thought he would bleed to death, and giving notice to Wilcox of what had happened, made the best of my way to Dunkirk, where I met a ship just going to sail, and landed safely in England.

“Wilcox was not long after me, but when we met, refused to tell me where he had placed Lydia. This was arguing a distrust of me, that inspired me with a desire of revenge. I had heard him casually say, when he first arrived, that he had come strait to Havre, from the town where he had placed Miss Bennet.”

“I resolved to try and find her out, and if I could prevail on her to marry me, to release her, and then call Wilcox to an account for the mismanagement of her fortune, and the injuries he had done to her. Besides her personal qualifications, she was a prize worth looking after; and her estate would

“ would serve to clear me in the world, with which
“ I was very much embarrassed.

“ I could not by any means sift out from Wil-
“ cox, the place of her confinement : he ever elud-
“ ed my enquiries. With some difficulty I raised as
“ much money as would bear my expences, and I
“ have been a fortnight in France. It is not many
“ hours since I arrived here, and here I meet my
“ death : I thought it was near at hand, when I
“ saw the appearance of Chapman, whom I suppos-
“ ed to be no more ; and I confess I deserve it.”

“ Let me have your forgiveness before you die,”
“ said Chapman : “ badly as you have treated me,
“ I am sorry to have been the instrument of your
“ death, and considering the life you have lived, la-
“ ment my being concerned in plunging you into
“ eternity.”

“ I forgive you,” replied the dying man, “ very
“ heartily, and may Heaven be as merciful to me :
“ Chapman, I am going where my art and hypocrisy
“ will not avail me. How I have lived, I dread to
“ think ; but do you amend your ways : every
“ thing before me is darkness, doubt and horror.
“ Wretched is my state, and miserable do I die. I
“ dare not ask for mercy, who have never shewn
“ any ; and how shall I pray to a God, whom I
“ have ever been at war with ? then I know my
“ fate, and eternal misery must be my portion : yet
“ do you pray for me—I can no more. This farce
“ of life is ended.”

His last breath accompanied these words, and he
closed his eyes, to open them no more. Hillaston
and Chapman trembled with horror at his dreadful
exit. As he had himself cleared Chapman in French
to his auditors, Hillaston explained the rest of his
speech to them. They shrugged up their shoulders,
pitied the heretic, and called it an unfortunate *ren-
contre*. Rigby, with some assistance, had recalled his
Lydia

Lydia to life again. She looked about for some time, as if terrified at something she saw.

“Are you still here?” said she to Rigby. Did not I see two men fighting?”

“You did, my love.”

“Oh! save me from them; for they are two of those that carried me away.”

“Fear nothing, my dearest, my best Lydia: I know one of them.”

“Aye, he was my friend; and they killed him, I thought: but you do not know the other.”

“No: but I will directly;” said he, going.

“Oh, do not you leave me, do not you! I shall expire with fear if you do.”

She held him as she spoke.

“I will not quit you for a moment,” said he, pressing her trembling hand to his lips: and desiring a servant to send Mr. Hillaſton up to him, ſeated himſelf by his newly recovered treasure. Hillaſton’s countenance was expreſſive of the horrid ſcene he had juſt been a witneſs to: and, on his friend’s relating his Lydia’s apprehenſions, he told him what had paſſed.

“Chapman has robbed me of my vengeance; but yet it was due to his hand,—yet, would that I had met the villain!”

“You frighten me to death, Mr. Rigby. Has Mr. Chapman killed him?”

“He has, Madam.”

“Good God!—Let us haſten from this ſcene of death: I ſhall not be eaſy till I quit this deteſted country.”

Rigby conſented to depart as ſoon as poſſible; and requeſted the favour of Hillaſton, as morning approached, to ſee in what manner they could beſt get off. In his abſence the enraptured Rigby poured forth his heart before his miſtreſs, and from her he received the moſt tender marks of reciprocal love.

While

While they were thus mutually giving and receiving pleasure, Chapman sent word to Rigby by Hillaſton, that, if it was permitted, he ſhould eſteem it a very great happineſs to have an opportunity of aſking Miſs Bennet's pardon. She declared ſhe ſhould be very glad to ſee him, and acknowledge herſelf under the greateſt obligations to him. He came into the room, but ſhe could not prevent his throwing himſelf on his knees before her.

“ I am aſhamed, Madam, to appear in your preſence, after having acted ſo baſe a part as I formerly did by you : but I hope—”

“ Indeed, Sir, I cannot ſpeak to you while you remain in ſo improper a poſture. I have many thanks to return to you for your gallant and generous defence of me. Pray, Sir, riſe.”

He obeyed.

“ I conſpired to deceive you, Madam : and, when I was ſenſible of the crime I had committed, the leaſt I could do was to endeavour to repair it as well as I was able. If you forgive me I ſhall be happy.”

“ I do indeed, Sir ; and, whenever it is in my power, I will make you ſenſible of my gratitude.”

“ Carriages are prepared,” ſaid Hillaſton, “ and we had better make the ſhorteſt way poſſible from this place.”

They agreed to his propoſal, and ſet off immediately. Hillaſton was not the leaſt happy of the company : he longed to ſee his Hannah again, with whom he had regularly correſponded during his abſence from her. They proceeded by the ſhorteſt road to Havre. Rigby travelled with his beloved Lydia in one carriage, and Chapman with Hillaſton in another. During the journey Rigby prevailed on Lydia to relate to him the accidents that befell her ſince he left her. Though he was perfectly well acquainted with them, yet they had a greater effect upon

upon him when told by her. He kissed the tear from her cheek, which the remembrance of her misfortunes caused, and often accompanied her.

“ I found myself secure,” said she, continuing her history, “ in the friendship of Mr. Chapman ;
“ and, from the generous concern he shewed for
“ me, was convinced that he would give me more
“ effectual proofs of his sincerity, as soon as ever it
“ was in his power. I saw he was afraid to speak
“ to me, lest they should fathom his intentions, and
“ prevent them. The second night after our land-
“ ing we lay at a little town : Wilcox, Chapman,
“ and the Captain, who was killed, sitting up as
“ usual, after I retired to lament my misfortunes,
“ and being thus torn away from my friends, in a
“ strange country, and in the power of a man who
“ for aught I knew, intended to sacrifice me for the
“ sake of my fortune. My reflections were really
“ dismal. I spent the night in tears ; and often did
“ I wish for you, for I had no other friend : the
“ man who was nearest allied in blood to me, seek-
“ ing my destruction. By the first dawn of day, I
“ heard him at my door, desiring me to prepare
“ myself to go along with him instantly. I had
“ not taken off my cloaths since I had left England :
“ and I had started up immediately. I found him
“ waiting for me, and a carriage ready : he would
“ not admit me to parley with him, but put me into
“ the chaise, and getting in after me, it drove
“ off at a furious rate. When I had a little reco-
“ vered myself, I asked him why he treated me
“ thus.

‘ To preserve you from falling into the hands of
‘ the man I detest,’ said he, ‘ and to secure you an
‘ happy and safe retirement from the ills of the
‘ world, which so weak and unexperienced a girl as
‘ you are, would most undoubtedly suffer, were
‘ you not properly taken care of.’

‘ Good

‘ Good God ! what will become of me ! Where is Mr. Chapman ? ’

‘ He has paid the tribute of his folly, in taking your part : Tipton has dispatched him. ’

“ I was struck dumb with horror : I had every thing to fear from the villainy of the man whom I was then with : yet I cared not, and upbraided him in the bitterest terms for his usage of me : reminded him of the obligations he was under to my father, and conjured him to set me at liberty ; again offering to resign him half my fortune. ”

‘ That will not do, ’ said he, ‘ when I can have it all. Already your death is believed in England : the newspapers have published it ; and there was a young woman, who assumed your name, and personated you, buried, and registered properly. I have laid such a train as cannot easily be traced ! ’

‘ O heaven ! ’ exclaimed I, ‘ what will my poor Rigby suffer ! ’

‘ I rejoice in being the occasion of his sufferings : I enjoy his misery : I believe he loved you, and the greater his torment : he triumphed over me once, it is my turn now : I hear his groans, I see his anguish, and deride them both ! ’

“ I was almost distracted at this treatment. I knew, by my own heart, what yours must feel, and it gave a double load of woe to support. ”

“ In three days travelling, almost without interruption, we came to the convent, where you so happily found me. Wilcox had heard a character of the abbess, and knew how to deal with her. Her bigotry and avarice were at continual war for a superiority ; and they governed her : both conspiring to deprive her of humanity or pity. He told her, that he was my eldest brother ; that he had been born of catholic parents, and educated in the principles of that holy religion : that being in a land of heretics, I had indicated an intention of
“ quitting

“ quitting the faith of my fathers, and marrying a
 “ man who was a protestant, of mean family, and
 “ who would force me to quit my religion ; and
 “ that, in order to secure me in the right way, he
 “ had at the peril of his life, brought me to her.”

“ The laws of England,” said he, “ are very strict
 “ against such proceedings : but I could not see her
 “ going to ruin herself eternally, without doing my
 “ utmost endeavours to prevent her. Therefore I
 “ must commit her to your care, having heard the
 “ greatest character of your piety and virtue.”

“ As he spoke, he put a sum of money into her
 “ hands, adding, that he would pay for me a double
 “ pension, in order that I might be used well ; and
 “ advanced her two years before-hand.

“ She praised his conduct, and compared him to
 “ all the saints in her calendar.

“ I had got the better of the surprize this false
 “ tale had occasioned, and interrupted her by telling
 “ my story. She would not hear me, and I walked
 “ into those horrid walls.

“ He remained with her for some time after I was
 “ gone, as I heard, and then gave her instructions
 “ how to treat me : for upon no account was I per-
 “ mitted to have pen or ink, and I was most strictly
 “ watched by some of the nuns, who were her crea-
 “ tures : for there are as many parties and intrigues
 “ within the walls of a convent, as in a court.

“ Thus deprived of every possible means of retur-
 “ ning to my native country and my friends, I pass-
 “ ed my wretched hours in affliction ; but yet, I in-
 “ dulged an hope, that you would not see me thus
 “ abused, and would trace this iniquitous affair to
 “ the source. Alas ! I could lend you no clue to
 “ help you to unravel this mystery. I was a wretch-
 “ ed prisoner, and had no prospect of redress ; yet
 “ heaven was kind and merciful to me : it inspired

“ me

“ me with the hope of seeing you once more ; and
 “ that supported my spirits, and enabled me to bear
 “ the insults I met with every hour, from superstitious
 “ zeal, and the hardships I endured every day, by
 “ being obliged to conform to the rules of the house.
 “ The greatest consolation I had was the company
 “ of one of the nuns, who was forced into the con-
 “ vent, contrary to her inclination, by her family :
 “ Her name was Beatrice. She was a lovely girl,
 “ scarce twenty. She used to mix her tears with
 “ mine ; and I returned the compliment, in lamen-
 “ ting her confinement, and her melancholy fate :
 “ but we could seldom indulge ourselves in this
 “ delightful confidence ; for the mother abbess
 “ placed spies over us, before whom we could not
 “ open our distressed hearts, or vent our complaints.
 “ Thus did I pass away my time, till that happy
 “ night that brought you to my relief, and I think
 “ no more of my troubles.”

“ Beloved of my soul,” said the enraptured youth,
 pressing her to his panting breast, “ it shall be all my
 “ future endeavour to make you forget them. To
 “ thee, and thee alone will I devote myself, and may
 “ the blessing of that beneficent God, who has so
 “ wondrously led me with a mighty hand to relieve
 “ you, crown our days with peace and joy.

They arrived safe at Havre, and as Lydia had lost
 every thing in the fire, she was obliged to supply her-
 self with necessaries there. Rigby had offered his
 assistance to her, and when she took the sum she
 thought requisite, told him, smiling, that he must be
 her banker then, and she would endeavour to repay
 him some time or another.

“ That look of kindness, Lydia, is sufficient to re-
 “ pay me, were it all I have in the world.”

Every day, every hour, did the happy couple de-
 monstrate their pure and virtuous affection more fully,
 and become dearer, if possible, to each other.

With

With a prosperous and favourable gale did our joyful company leave France. They saw with pleasure the coast lessening to their view, till they lost it entirely. While they were on their passage, they had a consultation in what manner to proceed; Hillaston offered it as his opinion, that the surest way would be for Rigby to give himself a lawful claim, by marrying Miss Bennet, to call Wilcox to an account; and that the ceremony should be performed as soon as it conveniently could, after they landed; and that he, at the same time, had designed to make Hannah Wilkins his wife. Rigby replied, that he would leave it to him: but that he himself had not yet spoke to Miss Bennet, to know if it would be agreeable to her to proceed in so hasty a manner. At that moment he felt some uneasy sensations in his own bosom, that had been drown'd before in the flood of joy that overwhelmed him. It was very true that he had every thing to hope from the affection which Miss Bennet had for him; but the great inequality between them, in point of fortune, hurt him. His generous heart would have been much better pleased to have conferred wealth on her. The world also would impute to interested motives, what sprang from pure affection,—he wished to be able to prove his love to Lydia by some other means than profession. He went down to her to the cabin, and informed her what his friend had been proposing. “But how, Lydia,” added he, “can I pretend to solicit you to wed me? I who am not by any means possessed of an independence—My aunt may take a dislike to me: she is old and capricious, and may not perhaps remember me.”

“What have I done to you, Mr. Rigby,” said she, interrupting him, “that you will not permit me to oblige you? Without your partaking it, my fortune would not afford me pleasure—sure you won’t

“won’t refuse this hand —” and she stretch’d it out to him :

“No, that I would not,” said he, folding it in both his hands, “though death was to be the consequence of my accepting it. — Thou kind, thou generous girl, how shall I ever make thee amends for this goodness ?”

“I will be contented,” said she, “if you will only continue to love me.”

“My future life shall convince you of the sincerity and extent of my passion.”

They had a quick and good passage : and great was Lydia’s joy when she landed in England again. She required some repose after the fatigues she had undergone ; and Rigby proposed that she should stay for a day or two at Southampton, where they landed, to refresh herself. In the mean time Hillaston and Chapman went up to London, where they hired a large house, ready furnished, and immediately wrote to his mother and sister to come up to him, acquainting them of his approaching nuptials. He also wrote to Wilkins and his wife entreating them to bring their daughter with them, and informing them of the reason of this request ; desiring, at the same time, to know if Wilcox was in that part of the country ; and, above all things, to keep their arrival a profound secret. In the limited time Rigby and Lydia followed him, and found every thing prepared for their reception. The next day Mrs. and Miss Hillaston arrived, to whom Miss Bennet was introduced ; and the intended change in her circumstances, when communicated to them, did not fail to crimson over her cheeks with a blush. Lydia, happy in their acquaintance, requested their assistance to procure those things which she wanted, as she could not send down to the country for her cloaths, or what she might have occasion for. While they were about settling the important business of dress, an express arrived from Farmer Wilkins, Inclosed to Hillaston, came a packet

a packet directed to Rigby ; but he was from home. Hillaſton found, by the Farmer's letter, that they ſhould be up within a week, and that Wilcox was then in the country, and had been guilty of many acts of oppreſſion towards his tenants ; and that many whiſpers had been circulated about on account of his couſin's ſudden death ; but that nobody dared ſpeak openly.

The Ladies returned before Rigby : and he communicated to them the intelligence he received. Lydia turned pale when ſhe heard Wilcox's name mentioned, for ſhe had not, even at that moment, overcome her fears of him.

When Rigby came home, Hillaſton put the packet into his hands, the ſeals of which he broke with a palpitating heart. Lydia watched his countenance as he read, and ſaw his blood mount into his cheeks, and his eyes ſparkled with joy.

“ I have now, Miſs Bennet,” ſaid he, “ ſome opportunity of, in part, returning the obligations I am under to you. But, nevertheless, they ſhall not be forgotten by me.”

He put the letter into her hands, which, at his deſire, ſhe read aloud. It was from the gentleman whom his aunt, lately deceased, had made joint executor of her will along with him, and who informed him that her eſtate, after the legacies which ſhe had bequeathed to ſome others were paid, would amount to above forty thouſand ; but that this ſum was left him upon condition that he ſhould aſſume the name of Kingsley. The whole company congratulated him on his acceſſion to his fortune, except Miſs Bennet.

“ Ah,” ſaid ſhe, “ I find that fortune is determined that you ſhan't be obliged to me. I can't help it.”

“ Charming Lydia,” ſaid he, taking her hand reſpectfully, “ the preſent you have already made
— me

“me of your heart, is a greater obligation than ever
“I can repay—but will you think as well of King-
“sley as you have done of Rigby?”

“I am so used to the former name, that I shall
“have but little regard for the other.—I shall never
“like it, though it has bestowed such a fortune up-
“on you.”

This produced a smile from the company, who partook of their happiness.

The next day the Wilkins's arrived, and the enamoured Hillaston presented his future bride to his mother and sister. The innocence, the modesty and beauty of the blushing Hannah, gained all their affections. So great was the love which the good old Lady had for her son, that she was happy by seeing him so. Lydia was particularly fond of her, from the many commendations she heard Kingsley gave her. Mr. and Mrs. Wilkins were overjoy'd at the prospect of their daughter's happiness, and the lucky change that had been in Rigby's affairs since they saw him. When he told the Farmer, that he must not call him Rigby any more, he replied that he could call him nothing else, though he was to get an estate by it. As all the necessary parties were then present, Hillaston proposed that their happiness should be delayed no longer than the next day. The old people joined him in opinion, and they overruled the objections that the girls yet had. In the evening they procured licences. Hillaston told Wilkins that he had some business at a lawyer's chambers in the Temple, as they went by it, and desired the favour of him to step in along with them as he had occasion both for Mr. Kingsley and him to witness a deed. The truth of it was, that he had made a settlement of three hundred pounds a year on Hannah Wilkins, if she should survive him, of which he and Kingsley were trustees.

The

The farmer scarcely could find words to thank him, for this unexpected generous action. All he required of him was to conceal it, he said, 'till after the ceremony was over. The next day, the happiest that ever rose on the enamoured couples, joined the hands of Kingsley with his adorable Lydia, and Hillaaston with the lovely Hannah.

Wilkins gave his daughter away: and Kingsley received from the hands of his friend, the most precious gift that heaven could bestow.

Mr. Wilkins and his wife, and Mrs. Hillaaston could not restrain the tear of joy that trickled down their cheeks, when they pronounced the parental blessing on their happy children—All was joy, all was rapture: nor was Chapman, who had been the happy instrument of their present felicity, forgotten on the occasion. Mrs. Kingsley presented him with a valuable diamond ring from her own finger; and Kingsley, taking him aside, assured him, as soon as ever his affairs were settled, as he yet wanted him to be confronted with Wilcox, that he would take care of his establishment in life. Chapman thoroughly ashamed of his past conduct, and incited, by the virtuous examples that he saw before him, to follow their steps, was entirely reformed, and truly abhorred his former way of life.

This day so replete with joy, was temper'd with a decent festivity, and crown'd with a rapturous night, which gave to the longing arms of the two bridegrooms, the possession of all those wishes which virtuous love can form. Nor were the brides less happy in their husbands, whose affections they could not entertain a doubt of, and in whom their future felicity was all centered.

In a week's time Wilkins and his wife went home, and the new-married pairs prepared to follow them within a few days. Mrs. Hillaaston and her daughter also went home to prepare for the reception of her daughter—

daughter-in-law, whose modest and affectionate behaviour greatly endeared her to them both.

Within the appointed time, Mr. and Mrs. Kingsley, and Mr. and Mrs. Hillafton, accompanied by Chapman, went down to farmer Wilkins's. The next day Hillafton, attended by Chapman, rode over to the late Mr. Bennet's house, where Wilcox now resided, it being the mansion-house of the estate, and more commodious than his own. He desired Chapman to remain at some little distance out of sight, though within call, and to be ready to appear when summoned. He went to the house, accompanied by his servant, and Mr. Wilcox soon waited on him in the memorable parlour which had been formerly also the scene of his disgrace. He started at the sight of Hillafton, whom he well remembered again. However, he endeavoured to conceal his confusion, and desired his visitor very politely to sit down.

"Sir," said Hillafton, as he seated himself, "I come on a message to you from Mr. and Mrs. Kingsley, who desire to know by what authority you enjoy this estate, and to recommend it to you to evacuate this house as soon as possible, and also to prepare an account of the receipts of rent and money during the time you have been in possession of it."

"Really, Sir, this is a very extraordinary message, and delivered in as strange a manner—Kingsley—Kingsley—I know no such persons, Sir, and therefore I shall return them no answer. And I shall maintain the possession of this house against every person who can pretend to have a claim to it."

"Then you have, no doubt, a very good right, Sir: but, as I am a messenger, an agent only in this matter, I cannot return without some account to give them of the answer you shall make."

"I shall

"I shall make none other than I have already done.
 "But pray who is this Mr. Kingsley that has em-
 "ployed you on this sleeveless errand?"

"He is a young gentleman whom you have for-
 "merly known well, Sir. His name was Thomas
 "Rigby: he has now changed it for a very consider-
 "able estate, which was left him on that condition,
 "and his wife is nearly related to you, Sir: her
 "name was Lydia Bennet, whose father was your
 "uncle."

"That must be a falsehood, Sir: my Cousin has
 "been dead four months and upwards. I saw her bu-
 "ried. I was with her when she died. As her heir
 "I inherit this estate."

"This is something odd, indeed. I thought I
 "could have sworn to Miss Bennet."

"Pray, Sir, did not you once make a disturbance
 "at my house in town?—And about her death too,
 "if I don't mistake?"

"You do not, Sir; you are right enough; I did
 "so."

"Then I wonder at your presumption in appearing
 "before me again."

"I would not have done it, but in a particular
 "cause."

"Then now, Sir, I beg you may retire."

"You fly in a passion, Sir, and I want to talk this
 "matter over coolly with you."

"So extraordinary and insulting an errand, banish-
 "es coolness: I must repeat my desire."

"Upon my word, Sir, this haste will not contri-
 "bute to the settling of matters. Do you know one
 "George Chapman?"

"I do not."

"Not know him! that is strange. Do you know
 "Captain Tipton, then?"

"Why

“ Why these questions ? I shall answer none of them.”

“ Tom,” said Hillaston, to his servant, who was in waiting, “ desire the gentleman to step hither : you need be under no apprehensions, Mr. Wilcox, he is no stranger.”

“ Sir,” said Wilcox, rising from his chair, “ I do not understand this treatment. Nothing but your being under my roof, should have protected you so long. Retire then, Sir, before I am obliged to violate the laws of hospitality.”

“ Wretched man ! in a few minutes your present importance will vanish, it will be no more heard of. Thy infatuation leads thee to the brink of a precipice, that but to look at, would make reason giddy.”

“ Thy arts are all found out, thy schemes all discovered, thy mysterious behaviour all exposed, and made public. Punishment awaits thee : condign exemplary punishment : know, that Miss Bennet has been found ; that she is now married to the man you detest, and they are come to claim and assert their rights. What can you say to oppose them ?”

Every word of this speech harrowed Wilcox’s soul with fear. It redoubled when Chapman entered the room, and stood before him. Conscious guilt struck him dumb. His hair rose an end on his head, his eyes were just bursting from their sockets, and his whole appearance indicated the extreme of terror and amazement.

“ You may look, Wilcox,” said Chapman, “ but it is really me who stand before you. The man whom you thought was fallen a sacrifice to your arts, and the villainy of your base associate, now lives to proclaim aloud your crimes. That midnight treacherous assassin has already fallen by my hand ; and the pit which he dug for me, has re-

“ceived him. The hour of your disgrace and shame
“is not far off, and I shall be revenged on you, for
“adding to the crimes that have polluted my soul.”

Wilcox threw himself into a chair, and remained silent for a little time ; his hand covered his face, and he sat as if struck with thunder. He was roused from this state of insensibility, by Hillaſton’s asking him what he intended to do.

“I know what I have to do, very well,” replied he, fiercely. “Your contrivance will have no effect upon me. I shall maintain the right I am
“posſeſſed of, whiſt I have life : and as for your
“having my couſin Lydia Bennet, it is an abſolute
“falsehood, which I ſhall treat as ſuch, till I ſee her
“myſelf.”

“That you ſhall ſoon be ſatisfied in,” ſaid Hillaſton. “Expect to ſee the lawful miſtreſs of this
“house in a few hours.”

He and Chapman left the place directly, and rode to Wilkins’s as faſt as they could, and related the reception they had met with. Upon which it was judged adviſeable for Mr. and Mrs. Kingsley to go over to him.

This ſhe at firſt objected very ſtrongly to, but was at laſt perſuaded to comply with, for ſhe could not get rid of thoſe terrors which the ſight of him would create, and even the mention of him occaſioned. Some hours elapſed, and it was the afternoon before the party arrived at Mr. Wilcox’s. They entered the area before the houſe, without ſeeing any body : their own ſervants opened the coach door, and Hillaſton and Chapman entered the houſe, for Mrs. Kingsley would not quit her huſband, without meeting even a ſervant.

They applied themſelves to a bell which they ſaw, and a man at laſt appeared, bearing the moſt evident marks of confuſion and fear in his countenance.

“Where

“Where is Mr. Wilcox?”

“He is dead.”

“Dead! said the astonished Hillafton.”

“Yes, he killed himself, Sir,” said the fellow, his teeth chattering with fear.

“Oh, God, have mercy on him. Where is his wife?”

“She is in fits above stairs.”

Hillafton ran out to acquaint Mrs. and Mr. Kingsley with this dreadful accident. She was obliged to be supported into the house, so much was she affected. After she was a little recovered, she proposed seeing Mrs. Wilcox, whom she truly loved, and taking her away from this scene of distress.

A servant was sent to her, who informed her of Lydia's arrival, and desire to see her. She begged her to come to her. Lydia went instantly and flew to her afflicted friend. They remained speechless in each others arms for some minutes, before their tears eased their over-burthened hearts, and gave their words utterance.

Whilst they were thus employed, Hillafton and Chapman were conducted to the room where the wretched Wilcox yet lay: his countenance was the picture of despair; the fatal pistol lay by his side, and his blood streamed along the floor. His shattered brains stained the opposite wall. They were struck with horror at the sight, and both their bosoms were differently affected with it.

“So should I have lain,” said Hillafton, to himself, “if my fatal purpose had been executed. Thus should I have expired the object of almighty vengeance, and in a state of irremediable misery. Thanks to God, who has given me an opportunity to repent of my intentions.”

“Thus should I have been served, had I met my deserts,” said the penitent Chapman, aloud.

“Thy

“ Thy death, unhappy man, shall be of service to
 “ me. Thy present appearance shall never quit my
 “ sight, nor thy idea my remembrance.

“ I will supplicate Heaven to forgive my offences,
 “ and pardon those crimes which have brought
 “ thee to this dreadful end. Let us go, Sir, from
 “ this scene of blood. My heart dies within me.”

Hillaston, casting his eyes about, perceived a letter lying on the table before him, and on a close inspection, found it was directed to Rigby. He took it in his hand and left the room, attended by Chapman, whose countenance was changed to a deadly pale. He found Kingsley walking backward and forward in the parlour, in a very uneasy state of mind. Hillaston described Wilcox's situation to his friend, and then delivered him the letter. He broke it open with a trembling hand, and read these words aloud.

“ Wonder not that I cannot see the face of those
 “ whom I have so much injured; or bear those reproaches and that shame I have so much deserved. My own hand shall revenge you, and I die the victim of my own guilt; but punish not my helpless children or my innocent wife, for my sake, they have not offended. The world says you are generous: I will put it to the proof, for I commit them to your care. Farewel—there is no bearing thetings of conscious guilt, and yet live.”

“ I will,” said Kingsley, “ take care of your children and your wife, unhappy man. In me, if Heaven prolongs my life, they shall find a father and protector.”

Mrs. Kingsley happily prevailed on her cousin to quit that scene of woe; and she took her in her coach to farmer Wilkins's. Chapman at his own desire was left behind, and took care of the funeral, which was as private as possible.

The

The friendship and generous assurances of Kingsley, helped to dry up Mrs. Wilcox's tears. In a short time they placed her in her own house, and made a genteel provision for her and the children.

Mr. Kingsley offered to Chapman his choice of a commission or a farm, which he had then vacant on his estate.

Chapman chose the latter: for he said, "he could not trust himself in the world again, and the remainder of his life would but barely atone for his past offences."

His conduct was so blameless, that Hillaston had no objection to give him his sister, who took a great liking to him. Captain Coates had renewed his addresses to Maria Leeson, and was well received; their marriages were celebrated together, Mr. Leeson, and Mr. Kingsley both attending at Mr. Hillaston's, whose generosity Mr. Kingsley returned, by settling five thousand pounds on his eldest daughter.

Kingsley had now attained the summit of earthly happiness. Possessed of fortune, independance, and the woman he loved, he had nothing more to wish for, than a continuance of that state, which was still more endeared to him by the remembrance of past woes; yet his heart was not elated with pride, nor did he forget he was a man.

In continual acts of benevolence and humanity did he and his lovely wife exercise themselves. The tear of distress was wiped away in their presence, and poverty never went unrelieved from their gate. Mr. Kingsley never would enter into the busy world, and several times refused the offer of a neighbouring borough: he accepted of the commission of the peace indeed, for the good of the people about him: the happiness of his tenants and of mankind in general, was his study and delight.

This

This amiable couple beheld with joy their virtues reflected, in the smiling offspring which Heaven gave them, to crown their pure and constant loves. Reader, imitate their actions—Be good and be happy.

F I N I S.

